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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A GROUNDED THEORY INVESTIGATION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

BY

DORIS FREDERICKA RYAN ©

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING 1993

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ISBN 0-315-82066-7

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DEGREE: Master of Education

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled A Grounded Theory Investigation of Positive and Negative Experiences of Education Students at the University of Alberta in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Counselling Psychology.

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DATE: April 20, 1993

DEDICATION

To my daughter Nikki, the brightest star and most wonderful teacher of life that I've had the pleasure of meeting.

ABSTRACT

The positive and negative experiences of students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta were explored in the present study using grounded theory methodology. This discovery model of research aims to generate theory that is grounded in the data and was used in this study to generate theory related to student satisfaction in the Faculty of Education. To accomplish this goal, there was an exploration for processes that accounted for all or most of the variation observed in the participants' accounts of their educational experiences. Data for the research came from unstructured, tape-recorded, face-to-face interviews with five students who had recently graduated and three students who were near completion of their program in the Faculty of Education. Prior to the interviews, the students were asked to reflect on their positive and negative experiences while in the program. During the interviews open-ended questions were asked regarding their experiences. The descriptions of their positive and negative experiences while in the program and their suggestions for bringing about improvements were analyzed. Using grounded theory methodology, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed for meaning unit categories. When new meaning units were no longer identifiable, coding of transcripts ended. Each category of meaning was supported by examples of their occurrences. The categories

were sorted into themes and the themes were linked to form the basis for a grounded theory conceptualization of the student-satisfaction phenomena in the Faculty of Education. The main categories for the phenomena of Positive Experiences were **learning experiences**, **administrative assistance**, and **good teaching qualities**. For Negative Experiences, the categories were **non-learning experiences**, **practicum errors**, **discontinuity of learning**, **administrative difficulties** and, **poor teaching qualities**. Finally, major categories for the phenomena of Restructuring were **course improvements**, **practicum improvements**, and **administrative improvements.** Interviewees perceptions of their experiences in the Faculty of Education was influenced by a dominant philosophy labeled **reality-based learning**. When interviewees sensed that the information they were acquiring could be translated into actual, practical and applicable information for the "real-world" of teaching or could be used to achieve their own administrative goals in the faculty, then experiences were seen as positive. The opposite was true of negative experiences. Their focus on restructuring was also influenced by their reality-based philosophy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all the people who helped make this thesis become a reality by giving in big and little ways:

The participants who were willing to share their experiences in the Faculty of Education;

Dr. David Sande and **Dr. Don Richards**, my committee members, for their patience and insights about the study;

Dr. John Paterson, my supervisor, for his patience, humour, encouragement, and uplifting manner;

Aneta Coulter, for her quiet support;

John Morgan, for giving of his time and keeping me well-fed;

Susan Hurst, for letting me cry on her shoulders;

Marianne Wright, for having heard;

Rosemary Moulden, who in the early stages kept encouraging;

Noga Liron, who in the later stages showed all her ways of caring;

Casey Boodt (Das Boot), who added that piece to the puzzle; and,

Julia C. Ryan, my mother, who foolishly taught me early in life that an education was important.

THANK YOU!

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The start of this project began when I approached Dr. John Paterson, Associate Dean in Research and External Relations, requesting that he become my thesis supervisor. I presented to him ideas I had for a thesis proposal and he suggested some work he had been hoping a graduate student might we willing to undertake. Dr. Paterson and Dr. David Sande, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies had mailed out about 800 letters (See Appendix A) to students who had graduated from the Faculty of Education in the Spring of 1992. The letters requested that graduates provide some feedback detailing any positive or negative experiences during their program of study that would be helpful for the administrators to know about, including suggestions to improve delivery of service. Their responses could provide valuable information to use in a thesis project as well as meet the administrators' goal of gathering information that would help better serve education students' needs in the future. The first of these letters were sent out in May, 1992 with the expectation of a 10% (80-100) response rate. By the middle of July only nine responses had been received.

By this time I had already agreed to participate in this worthwhile project. However, it seemed that with the extremely limited response that another approach would have to be taken. In discussion with my supervisor, it was decided that in-depth interviews with a small number of students using grounded theory methodology might provide a description of themes applicable to the topic at hand, i.e, students' positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education. These themes, being "grounded" in the data (students' perspectives of their program of study) would ideally highlight those areas of concern most impactful to the graduates.

Throughout this study, I have used the term "I" to refer to the researcher, since clear acknowledgement of the role of the researcher and documentation of the integral part played in the interpretation of his or her observations is an essential requirement in qualitative research (Stiles, 1991). I decided to go through the mailing list and select participants based on age and sex. I randomly selected two males and females ranging in age from the early, mid and late twenties and thirties to the early fifties.

I collected the names of thirty-four graduates and sent out letters asking them to participate in the study along with a description of what would be required of them (See Appendix B). Our goal was to be able to set up about five to nine interviews, depending on what would be needed to meet the requirements of "saturation" - analysis of additional data provided no new categories, properties, or relationships (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988) - in grounded theory methodology.

Unfortunately, out of the thirty-four letters, only three responses were forthcoming. Two of the respondents had had over ten years of teaching experience and had returned to the Faculty as post-diploma students for upgrading. The criteria for eligible participants were that they had spent at least two years in the Faculty of Education, graduated in 1992 and were new to the profession of teaching. It was felt that previous teaching experience and short-stay (less than two years) in the Faculty did not meet the eligibility requirements for the parameters of this particular study. Thus, of the three respondent only one was selected to participate.

I had to take another approach and make some adjustments to my criteria. I decided to also include in the project those students who were in their final semester of study. Eight participants were gathered through word of mouth. When one participant was found, he or she was asked if they knew of anyone else who would be willing to volunteer. This was, interestingly, a much more efficient way of finding people for this project. Finally, the study was on its way.

Smylie (1989) cites various authors (e.g., Anderson, Okazawa-Rey, & Traver, 1986: Holmes Group, 1986: Soltis, 1987) as bringing attention to the discussion and debate among educators and policymakers concerning the quality, characteristics, and functions of formal teacher education, especially preservice teacher education programs. Of particular practical and theoretical importance to this study is a clearer understanding of the critical determinants of satisfaction with one's program. Hearn (1985) comments on the the well publicized "Involvement in Learning" report of 1984 as pointing out the importance of understanding students' reaction to and evaluation of their academic program due to its significance in both program evaluation and educational achievement. The object of the research reported here was to explore and investigate the experiences of students in the Faculty of Education and to study the impact of their various experiences on their satisfaction with the program. More specifically, through interviews of recent graduates and soon to be graduates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta in 1992/93, to look at the overall evaluation of their academic program. Thus, the question that became the focus of this study was:

"What were those positive and negative experiences in your program of study that significantly influenced your overall evaluation of the program?"

Grounded theory methodology was used to analyze students' positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education. In practical terms, the information gathered using grounded theory methodology could provide assistance to administrators in making useful policy changes to the existing program. In general terms, the goal was to generate theory regarding those positive and negative experiences influencing student satisfaction in preservice teacher training.

Statement of the Problem

A wide variety of program performance indicators have been developed over the past 20 years to meet growing accountability pressures in higher education on the performance of academic programs (Bowen, 1977; Tierney, 1981; Keller, 1983). Only recently have performance indicators of a different slant, such as overall student satisfaction, begun to receive serious policy attention (Harnett, 1976: Morstain, 1977). According to Hearn (1985) the impetus to look at performance of academic programs from a "softer", presumably less measureable aspect, has come from at least three directions:

First, some researchers have investigated how students' evaluations of their courses relate to their overall attitudes towards their academic experiences. This increase in research on students' opinions of various aspects of their academic contexts has lead to some changes in policy making in higher education. Hearn cites Neumann and Neumann (1981), as having

> suggested that departmental satisfaction compared to course/faculty satisfaction, may better reflect attitudes toward the college, may more powerfully influence attrition, course selection, and post-graduation

> behaviors, and may reflect critical information regarding the attractiveness of the college to outsiders (p.414).

Secondly, he notes that the popular works of Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Peters and Waterman (1982) have influenced "the cultural, phenomenological, and affective orientations in management thinking" (p.414). Hearn credits Kim Cameron (1978, 1981) and his colleagues at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems as having been influential in introducing to the higher education literature the significance of a phenomenological approach in organizational thinking: "Cameron has maintained that student and faculty satisfaction levels are important aspects of organizational effectiveness in colleges and universities" (p.414). Thus, the use of grounded theory methodology would allow for a more in-depth approach to the study of overall student satisfaction and add to the body of knowledge regarding preservice teacher training.

Third, in a review of the literature on academic satisfaction and its relationship to academic outcome, Hearn describes several innovative analyses that have been conducted regarding the nature of that relationship. He cites investigators such as Spady (1971), and subsequently Tinto (1975), Pascarella and Terenzini (1977), Bean (1980), and Endo and Harpel (1982) as arriving at similar conclusions regarding academic satisfaction as being a critical mediating factor in college persistence. Hearn also notes Bean and

Bradley (1984) finding that satisfaction seemed more a cause than an effect of academic performance. Other studies on academic satisfaction have looked at student's integration into, and commitment to, an institution; the connections between academic satisfaction and academic performance and attainment; variation in students' satisfaction with instruction, and policy implications. The interviewees in this study have either been recent graduates or soon to be graduates of the program, thus the question of attainment in relationship to satisfaction was not being directly explored. However, some of the interviewees may have had a greater struggle in achieving their goal because of their dissatisfaction with the program.

Significance of the Study

Clearly, the above results strengthen the case for increased theoretical and administrative attention to determinants of academic satisfaction. Researchers have begun to undertake more systematic explorations of the concept, measurement, causation, and significance of student academic satisfaction. However, Bolster, (1983) and Keller (1986) criticize higher education research for seldom addressing major issues and using research methods with too narrow a focus. Both argue that the scientific method is not an appropriate tool for studying individuals or social institutions and that there is a need to develop research strategies that are sensitive to its source of study. The present study was intended to contribute to the growing body of knowledge of social and psychological factors that influence the educational process in a manner that addressed the above criticisms of higher education research. The grounded theory method has been used to explore students' positive and negative academic experiences in the hope of generating theory on determinants of education that impact student's overall evaluations of their academic program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. The central assumption in this research was that better understanding of student satisfaction, through detailed analyses of their educational experiences, was fundamental to better understanding of education process and quality. The information obtained from this study may contribute to that better understanding. Potentially, the categories and themes generated from this exploratory study could be used to establish effective criteria for program changes in the Education department.

Methodological Framework

Bolster (1983) argues for a more effective model of research on teaching that structures inquiries in ways that are compatible with the more practical and useable aspects of discovery and verification "while still maintaining the intellectual rigor that systematic scholarship could add to the revision of pedagogy' (p.303). The purpose of this research was to produce knowledge that is sensible and therefore, useful in policy making by developing a conceptual framework for understanding and describing the student satisfaction phenomena. Since the significant variables in students' academic experiences had not yet been identified, a qualitative research methodology was employed to extract the theoretical question of "what are those significant variables?", rather than using traditional, quantitative, positivistic research which would have explored "how much?" and "In what direction?"

The focus of the study was on a process which was assumed to exist about which little theoretical development from an experiential point of view had been outlined. Grounded theory methodology was used to help identify the relevant variables that could not be measured until such identification was established. In this qualitative approach, data were inductively analyzed and then theory developed from the emerging themes "grounded" in the data, in contrast to quantitative research where already developed theory is tested and deductively analyzed. The grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was an appropriate method for developing a theoretical understanding of students' academic satisfaction that inherently reflected students' experiences in their own words. The object of this approach was to create theory that is intimately linked to the reality of the individuals studied (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988). Grounded theory seemed ideally suited for reflecting the realities of education students' experiences in the Faculty of Education because the theory emerged from analyzing the actual words spoken by the participants, and was thus truly "grounded" in them.

The interviews were conducted in the homes, place of work of the interviewees, and in my home. Eight individuals consented to participate in the study. Five of the participants had recently received their teaching degree from the Department of Education and three of the participants were completing their final semester. The data gathered in this research were the tape-recorded transcripts of the interviews with the participants and notes on interpretations of my observations.

Overview of the Thesis

The remaining chapters of this thesis were organized as follows: In Chapter II the literature relevant to student academic satisfaction and teacher-education was reviewed. Relevant existing theories *may* be used to make further connections (Turner, 1981), though this is not a requirement in grounded theory since the object of this mode of inquiry is to generate, not verify theory. Views diverge amongst grounded theorists about whether or not to make use of existing research. Field and Morse (1985) described Glaser's (1978) more orthodox view which argues that biases and predetermined assumptions would be introduced into the researcher's work if field work was preceded by a review of the literature. In order to avoid forming any preconceptions about the research topic that could interfere with the emergence of categories that truly reflect the data, Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate that the researcher not make use of the existing literature . Again, the goal of this method is to discover new ideas rather than verify the existence of preexisting ideas. There is the other extreme wherein grounded theorists examine the existing literature to use as a foundation for their own research question. The risk in this approach is that results from previous research may be faulty, invalid, tangentially related, and influential in distorting the researcher's openness to the question at hand. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged in both approaches that the researcher's analysis would be partly grounded in knowledge of the technical literature. Additionally, experiential data, which would include research experiences and personal experiences, would be an important source of insight and theoretical sensitivity (Strauss, 1987). A more moderate approach (Turner, 1981; Layder, 1982; Field & Morse, 1985; and Addison, 1989) was used in this study to describe and critique previous work in the area of student satisfaction. Since theoretical constructs were not hypothesized at the outset of this study, what preexisting studies emerged as significant could not be determined until completion of the data collection and analysis.

In Chapter III, a more in-depth explication of grounded theory methodology and rationale for its use was outlined. Procedures for gaining access to the population and selection of participants along with the issue of trustworthiness (validity and reliability) were presented. Also included were the procedures used for data collection and analysis, recording, labeling, classification and the development of central themes. The findings and a discussion with an emphasis on the most important themes emerging from the data was presented in Chapter IV. These themes were discussed in relationship to the original question posed in the study: "What are the positive and negatives experiences of students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta?" and with respect to the literature reviewed in Chapter II. Finally, in Chapter V the theoretical and practical implications of the study were discussed. It is anticipated that the findings will be added to the ongoing body of research on student satisfaction from an experiential perspective as well as provide some practical guidelines for the administrators in the Faculty of Education.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Approach to the Literature Review

The goal of grounded theory is to discover new ideas rather than verify preexisting ones. Glaser and Strauss (1967) would argue that the researcher should avoid forming any preconceptions about the research topic through review of the relevant literature so as not to interfere with the emergence of categories that truly reflect the data. The approach is designed to generate theory; not test it. Consequently, the researcher would look, in the formulation of his or her theory, to the data that emerges from the research, rather than to the existing literature. Those grounded theorists with a more orthodox approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 1988) would use the pertinent literature after the investigation is completed, thus allowing the theories to emerge in the analysis without creating biases at the outset of the research. Glaser (1978) reminds grounded theory researchers that:

> This general warning against sampling outside the substantive area before an emergent framework is established cannot be heeded too closely and carefully. Besides undermining the relevance of the substantive area, the literature's focus frequently becomes a "pet" interest of the analyst because of its respected author. (p.51)

The recommendation to ignore the relevant literature is difficult to reconcile with the acknowledgement that experiential data, which includes research experiences and personal experiences, are an important and valuable source of insight and theoretical sensitivity (Strauss, 1987). A more moderate approach about examining previous research is taken by others (Addison, 1989; Bulmer, 1979; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Turner, 1981) since the assumption is not made that the researcher can view the data without being influenced by preconceptions, especially when the research topic is not completely unfamiliar to the researcher. Nevertheless, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that researchers maintain an attitude of skepticism:

> All theoretical explanations, categories, hypotheses, and questions about the data, whether they come directly or indirectly from the making of comparisons, the literature, or from experience, should be regarded as **provisional**. They always need to be checked out, played against the actual data, and never accepted as fact. For example, categories derived from the research literature (variables identified in previous studies) are always context specific. They may fit the study from whence they came. However, this does not necessarily mean that they apply to the situation you are studying, or come together with other concepts in quite the same way

> as in previous theories. Remember then, any theoretical explanations or categories brought to the research situation are considered provisional until supported by actual data (are found to fit this situation) (p.45).

Miles (1979) comments on the need for clarity and focus in grounded theory research and suggests developing a rough conceptual framework at the outset. Thus, the existing literature is used as a guide and not as a basis for the design of the research (Field & Morse, 1985).

The more moderate approach was taken in the literature review for this study, since the researcher agreed with the viewpoints that held that one cannot possibly ignore his or her preconceptions, especially about a familiar topic. Stiles (1991) notes that:

> An investigation's cultural context entails many assumptions that channel the interpretations. Good practice demands efforts toward making implicit cultural assumptions explicit, by stating shared viewpoints and relevant values. The goal of this explication, like the goal of personal disclosure, is to orient the readers to the perspectives from which the phenomena were viewed and to remind them that this research, like all research, takes only one of many possible perspectives. (p.18)

In that light, the main purpose of this literature review was to enable the reader to view the phenomena as the researcher did at the start of the study. A preliminary search of the literature was done for the purpose of setting a context for the research project. As suggested by McCracken (1988), being familiar with the literature can sharpen the researcher's capacity to see something new because there is then "a set of expectations the data can defy. Counterexpectational data are conspicuous, readable, and highly provocative" (p.31). Thus, the issues and gaps in the research could be identified and presented as possible areas of exploration. As well, the theoretical literature served the purpose of providing a theoretical sampling source to confirm and enhance the developing theory. In keeping with the more moderate approach in grounded theory methodology, this review does not dictate the focus of the research, and instead, shows some of the gaps and the inconclusive nature of the research literature on the given topic.

Studies on Teacher-Education and Student Satisfaction

The body of literature related specifically to education students experiential view of their educational program is scarce. Searching through the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the Psychological Abstracts revealed how little research has been done to examine the experiential elements of student perspectives or student satisfaction. The majority of work done on academic satisfaction in the mainstream literature has tended to focus on empirically measurable behaviors relating to faculty-student interaction, grades, academic involvement, and, attitudinal changes during preservice teacher training. Other studies have focused on the sociological and economic returns to students' academic endeavours. Often a survey or questionnaire type format is used to determine students' perspective of their program. These surveys and questionnaires ask specific information about specific, preconceived areas of interest to the investigator. As regards satisfaction with their program, a point scale is often used to measure the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The information is then analyzed statistically to point to indicators of influence.

Some descriptive studies have looked at students internships and student practicums in order to get their impression of that aspect of their program. These studies have been closer to journalistic reporting rather than being rigorous and well-tied into a substantial qualitative methodology. In general, very little research has been done to explore students' perspective of their learning environment from an experiential or phenomenological perspective.

The use of grounded theory methodology allowed the researcher to view the phenomenon of positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education from a perspective that would generate new areas of exploration and theory formulation.

There was very little information in the existing literature that explained what contributed to the development of students' perceptual framework and evaluation of their academic program. Therefore, probing the perceptual organization of potential teachers could hopefully uncover information and patterns that could add to an understanding of this phenomenon. Frank (1987) commented that:

> The fundamental problem may be that traditional scientific method have been devised to discover relationships between facts, that is, objectively definable, measureable, repeatable phenomena. Facts can be confirmed or disconfirmed by the objective criteria of the scientific method; meaning cannot. The traditional methods of exact science are ill-suited to deal with the meanings and values....(p.298)

This research was based on the assumption that a person's perceptual organization (what the interviewees perceived) contributes to the determination of values (defining what is positive and what is negative) which are then possibly reflected in attitudes and behaviors (about and in the Faculty of Education). Another assumption was that grounded theory methodology could tease out relevant information that other methodologies might not have discovered.

The studies which were identified in the ERIC search (and selected others) as related to student satisfaction and preservice teacher training provided little in terms of information from students' experiential perspective. Following, however, is a description of the types of studies that have been done in the area of student satisfaction and preservice teacher training.

Empirical Studies

According to Bean and Bradley (1986), studies on student satisfaction came out of the student unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s with a focus on "levels of satisfaction in different areas as opposed to the causes of satisfaction" (p.393). They note that despite being a frequently used construct in academic investigations, college student satisfaction has received very little attention as a substantive area of research. Their study attempted to develop a model to assess the degree of reciprocity between academic performance and satisfaction and identify those factors (including gender) that were influential in affecting them. Their findings indicated that :

> (1) the causes of satisfaction differ for men and women; (2) only for women is the satisfaction relationship between GPA and satisfaction statistically significant; and, (3) where the relationship exists, the effects of satisfaction on GPA are greater than the effects of GPA on satisfaction. (p.410)

A major question arising from their research related to their finding that satisfaction was more a cause than an effect of academic performance. They note that "this study raises some concern over the theoretical models of student behavior based on the premise that performance causes satisfaction but that satisfaction has no effects on performance" (p.409). Their findings strengthens the case for increased attention to determinants of academic satisfaction from a theoretical and administrative perspective.

Of particular significance to this research was Hearn's (1985) quantitative study on determinants of college students' overall evaluations of their academic programs. This was due mainly to the fact that it came the closest to examining the same area of interest as the present study. Hearn had students evaluate their major departments along a scale where "very dissatisfied" was on one end and very satisfied" on the other when addressing specific elements of satisfaction. The six satisfaction indicators used by Hearn represented three domains: social support (professors' availability to students and opportunities for interacting with other students); teaching style (teaching ability and course stimulation); and faculty competence (perceived faculty knowledgeability and commitment). In general, his findings indicated that stimulating course work and good teaching were statistically more significant factors in overall departmental satisfaction than perceived faculty knowledgeability or faculty/student interaction. Hearn states that the central assumption of his hypotheses is " that better understanding of student satisfaction is fundamental to better understanding of educational process and quality" (p.417). He notes Braskamp, Wise, and Hengstler's (1979) argument that student satisfaction is a form of departmental quality that is statistically distinct from other aspects of departmental quality. Hearn acknowledges that his own focus on satisfaction indicators relating to a set of specific departmental characteristics suggested in earlier research may not be enough to tackle the complex, intertwined nature of academic satisfaction.

An earlier study from the educational research carried out by Neumann and Neumann (1981) compared a university in Israel and one in the United States in order to develop a scale of students' general satisfaction with college instruction and to assess the dimensions behind the scale. Four predictors (sex, major, school year, and academic performance) which could have an affect on students' satisfaction were examined. They found four factors to account for the variation in students' satisfaction with course work. These factors were satisfaction with presentations and lectures; tests and assignments; relations with professors; and techniques of teaching. Each of these factors were best predicted by a different combination of the above predictors. They found the dominant independent variable or best predictor across the four factors was students' academic performance. In conclusion, Neumann and Neumann presented that in terms of policy implications, the best ambassadors for colleges would be those high-performer students who should be actively recruited due to their importance in terms of the survival and vitality of the college.

Other research done by Neumann, Neumann and Reichel (1990) was not directly related to student satisfaction, yet could be useful to the exploration of the present phenomena under study. Their research involved the use of a path-analytic approach to examine the relationships between determinants of quality of learning experience and student burnout and the effect of these factors on student's commitment to their college. They defined the quality of the learning experience (QLE) as students' perceptions of the college's investments in the educational program and the processes by which colleges attempted to enhance learning. Their main theoretical assumption was that learning conditions that demand extremely high levels of effort without providing support mechanisms result in students' burnout. Their findings suggested:

> learning flexibility and college involvement reduce emotional exhaustion and increase felt accomplishment and, through these two learning reactions, positively affect college commitment. Emotional exhaustion also has a considerable indirect effect on commitment. The relevant predicting factor here is felt accomplishment. The process by which this indirect effect is characterized is as follows: emotional exhaustion

> reduces felt accomplishment and, through felt accomplishment, negatively affects commitment. (p.29)

Some researchers have done reviews and syntheses of the research on college impact and described methodological problems and suggestions for enhancing the research on the influences of colleges on students (Koehler, 1985; Pascarella, 1991; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991), while others explored the affective and attitudinal impact of preservice training on teachers (Gordon, Borger, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1984; Pigge & Marso, 1990; Pigge & Marso, 1987). Gustafson and Sorgman (1983) compared perceptions of institutional climate amongst female student teachers of varying age groups and religious backgrounds, hypothesizing that older students would have a different set of needs, concerns, and attitudes towards their programs than traditionally-aged students. Recommendations for institutional change based on participants needs were outlined.

A series of articles presented investigations on preservice field experiences (Applegate & Lasley, 1983; Bischoff, Farris & Henniger, 1988; Gordon, Borger, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1984; Malone, 1984), while others surveyed or used questionnaires to explore graduate students' concerns regarding their institution (Bond, 1990; Freeman, 1988; Roney, 1989). In Project Mafex, Malone (1984) used standard meta-analysis techniques to synthesize the available body of research on preservice field experience programs. His findings of the literature revealed that field experiences were generally positive; yet exposure to too many field experiences diminished previous gains on desired outcomes.

Descriptive Studies

An exploratory study on teachers' sources of learning was done by Zahorik in 1987. Interviews of 52 elementary school teachers revealed that they perceived interaction with colleagues and principals, as well as self-study and experimentation as more useful sources of learning than university courses, professional literature or in-service programs which lacked the qualities of being specific, immediate, and having personal knowledge of particular problems and teaching situations (as was the situation with interaction and individual study). Since this perspective may be reflected in the interviewees' comments, Zahorik's study was earmarked to later compare with the findings of this research.

Some studies looked at the individual experiences of student teachers based on their comments of their preservice teacher training (Edwards, 1982; Gettys, 1990; Hackey, 1990). Through interviews and observations (based on a similar premise to this thesis), descriptive outlines of students' experiences were provided. For example, Gettys (1990) presented a paper on a qualitative case study of three interns who had completed a fifth-year postbaccalaureate program that was recently implemented at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. After graduation these interns were hired as first year teachers in the same high school in which they had done their internships. The purpose of Gettys' study was to learn more about teacher-preparation programs through the postbaccalaureate fifth-year internships by comparing the perceptions of three of the interns who had graduated from the program. The conclusions from her research were that:

> According to the interns themselves, the strength of the postbaccalaureate fifth-year internship program lies in two basic areas: First, the length of time spent in the classroom and at the school site, and second, the quality and dedication of their co-operating teachers. Given the choice again they would choose the year long internship over the traditional semester length student teaching currently provided by many teacher preparation colleges and universities. (p.14)

None of the above studies, however, provided a rigorous examination of themes and categories that might possibly generate theory on student experience, as was the goal of this study. Their focus was more on a journalistic description of individual case studies through interviews of participants.

Finally, an interesting study by Holt-Reynolds (1992) examined the relationship between preservice teachers' sense of their coursework and teacher educators' assumptions of the same. She found that the rationales attached to teaching strategies as reasons for valuing them seldom matched between the student teachers and their instructors, though they talked as if they were the same. Suggestions were made for teacher educators to consider kinds of coursework experiences that would be more meaningful to preservice teachers:

> We need ways to explicitly invite preservice teachers to monitor their progress toward megacognitive control over their decisions as students of teaching and we need ways to evaluate that progress. We need to consider carefully what kinds of coursework experiences can invite preservice teachers to focus attention on how they evaluate new pedagogical principles rather than on what they can do with new instructional ideas. We will need to shift resources from support of technical skills and toward support of rationale building. We will need to confess that often, preservice teachers can get It technically "right" while on other levels getting It "wrong." (pp. 16-17)

Conclusions

While the literature to date addresses various aspects of preservice teacher training and student satisfaction, little research has been done that examines student's experiential perspectives of their program of study. The majority of the research is empirically-based. A systematic formulation of student educational processes based on themes directly tied to students' experiences is lacking. The literature does provide a rough conceptual framework that raises many questions. A number of directions could be pursued to explore some of the questions raised by the various studies on preservice teacher training, student perceptions and student satisfaction. Though the review of the literature provides a rich background for the research, the goal in this study was to allow for the possible emergence of theory not based on any preexisting theories from the literature. The final chapter in this thesis does look at existing theories for fit. However, connections were made after completion of the analysis of the data revealed emerging categories and eventually, possibilities for theoretical conceptualization.

In Chapter Three, the methodology used to explore students' positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education was addressed.

III. METHODOLOGY

Rationale

I believe that what is required and essential to any inquiry which hopes to be consonant with the participants' perspective on their experiences is that it must view human behavior as reflexive. People must be considered as both the creators of meaning in social situations and products of the consequences of their actions. Grounded theory methodology is premised on the postulates of symbolic interactionism: people act on the basis of the meaning events have for them; the inner, experiential, aspects of human behavior and the meaning of events arises out of social interaction (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Blumer (quoted in Heiss, 1981) states that each person "selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action" (p.2-3). What seems to often be missed in using quantitative methodologies are the experiential aspects of human behavior and the importance of the shared meanings which participants take from the process of interactions that ultimately shape their behavior. Examples of social interactions include activities and situations involving other human beings, institutions, objects, philosophical ideologies, or any combination of the above. Bolster (1983) argues that the:

> Significant knowledge of any social situation, therefore, consists of an awareness of the emerging meanings that participants are developing and the specific ways that these meanings are functioning to shape their endeavours and thus the characteristics of the situation itself (p. 303)

Using grounded theory methodology allows the researcher to gather data about a phenomenon of interest and build and verify a coherent explanation of how a particular phenomenon works from data that are systematically obtained from real-world situations. The ultimate purpose based on this view is quite different from that of traditional empirical research. Its aim is to establish principles that operate across a range of similar situations by looking at a limited number of variables in a given situation, and to control for others. At the other end of the spectrum, grounded theory methodology attempts, instead, not to verify universal propositions that predict certain outcomes, but rather to "generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved" (Glaser, 1978, p. 93).

This study was designed to conceptualize the phenomenon of student experiences in the Faculty of Education from the perspectives of the participants "involved" in that social interaction; namely, the students. Since there is an absence of theory specifically formulated that accounts for the experiential aspect of student perspectives on their program of study, quantitative, instrumental-based research guided by already existing theory is not useful at this point. This is not a criticism of quantitative methodologies, but rather argues that a qualitative approach is seen as being more compatible for the task at hand; for answering the question which would initially guide the inquiry, "What is going on here?" The two approaches are complementary, each having unique strengths and contributions (Field & Morse, 1985). In future studies, once theoretical constructs have emerged from this research, a quantitative approach could be used in verifying these constructs.

Research Design

The Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative method, an inductive method of discovering theory, was developed in response to a perceived crisis in social science research methodology by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as an alternative to deductive, armchair theorizing. It has been summarized in detail by Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988). In general, the method involves systematic categorization and analysis of data combined with theoretical sampling to generate a theory that is integrated, consistent and close to the data (in this case, interview transcripts that have been broken down into meaning units). The constant comparative method is the foundation of data analysis in the generation of grounded theory .

There are four stages outlined by Glaser and Srauss (1967) in the constant comparative method:

1. comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. integrating categories and their properties
3. delimiting the emerging theory
4. presenting the theory.

Quartaro (1986), added a fifth stage - collection of the data-, while Turner (1981) proposed that the research be divided into a series of nine stages to deal with the "absence of detailed guidelines for the handling of data" (p.230). These stages are not a series of linear steps, rather the research may be viewed as simultaneous and recursive since from the outset of the investigation the data is examined, coded, categorized, conceptualized, and initial ideas noted (Quartaro, 1986; Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 1988; Stern, 1980; and Turner, 1981).

The Collection of Data

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), those individuals, places or situations that are relatively similar and seem to provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation are selected. In this case, the participants were selected based on what was most central to the phenomena being studied: the experiences of students in the Faculty of Education. To maximize the chances that aspects of this phenomena would clearly emerge, students who had recently graduated or were in their last term of the program were selected. Unstructured, face-to-face interviews with voluntary participants were designed to gather information, gain descriptions of experiences and elicit details in the interviewees' own words. Interviews were deliberately open-ended so as not to limit information of the students' experiences that may have been unanticipated by the researcher and therefore, through guiding, introduced the researcher's bias (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982; Field & Morse, 1985; Stern, 1980). In theoretical sampling (the selection of new data sources on the basis of the emerging theory), the participants are selected indiscriminately since it is still uncertain which concepts are theoretically relevant. This extremely flexible approach allows for groups to be compared on the basis of even a single dimension, if that dimension is germane to the emerging theory (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). As the theory emerges, the researcher seeks those attributes in the respondents that are potential qualifiers of the emerging theory. The selection is thus guided by how clearly respondents represent the phenomenon and also how they differ from the initial sources in ways that seem to be relevant.

In order to verify the usefulness of categories, generate basic properties and establish sets of conditions for a degree of variation, the researcher minimizes differences in the comparison groups. As the basic theoretical framework emerges, the researcher looks for data sources which are dissimilar or an extreme variation of the phenomena; that is, maximizing differences among comparison groups. Maximizing differences in data once the focal aspects are identified allows for further generation and refinement of the theoretical properties of the research (Conrad, 1978; Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Selection of Interviewees

The selection of the interviewees was based on those individuals who were likely to represent the phenomena, were able to communicate knowledge of the topic under study, and were willing to share their knowledge and time with the researcher. The criteria used in choosing the participants were that:

1. They were students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta
2. They had graduated from the Faculty in 1992 or,
3. They were completing their final term in Spring of 1993.
4. They were in the Faculty of Education for no less than two years.
5. They were not post-diploma students. That is, they had no prior professional teaching experience.

Prior to the study, it was determined that recent graduates or soon to be graduates would better reflect similarities in their educational program if their experiences were within the same time period. This minimized some of the variability in program planning that would occur for students from various years. Students were selected from Elementary or Secondary Education. There were no participants from Special Education. Though, the researcher would have liked to have interviewed students from that department, none were forthcoming when the request was made for volunteers.

Initially, prior to this researcher's involvement with the study, 800 letters had been sent out by the Dean of Research in the Faculty of Education to recent 1992 graduates. As noted in Chapter One, the response to the letters were dismal. Once this researcher became involved in the project, personal letters were sent out to 34 graduates. Three responded, of which two were post-diploma students. Post-diploma students already had prior professional teaching experiences and were thus, not suited to the study. The eight participants who did eventually agree to be a part of this research were located from the researcher's contacts with acquaintances in the student population or from referrals of participants in the study.

The research process was explained to each participant through telephone contact or in person. This included an explanation of the purpose of the study, issues of confidentiality, the nature of the tape-recorded interviews, and the time commitment. Participants were also informed that they could decline to participate at any time. The participants were given a choice as to the location of the interview. One participant was interviewed on videocassette at the Education Clinic in one of the counselling rooms. Two were interviewed in their homes, three were interviewed in my home, and one was interviewed at her place of work on audiocassette.

The Participants

The participants in this study were six women and two men. Four of the women had graduated in 1992. One of the graduates had been hired by the Edmonton Public School Board as an elementary teacher. One could only find work on the substitute teachers' list, which at the time of the interview suited her needs. One recent graduate eagerly sought work, but had heard that the school board was not hiring, and one had chosen to take a year off after graduation, while working in a related field. Two of the graduates were parents, one had recently married and one was single. The four students who were to graduate in the Spring of 1993 were all single and without children, though some were involved in long-term relationships. The ages of the participants ranged from 23 to 45 years. Five were from Elementary Education and three from Secondary Education. All the participants were willing to describe and share their experiences in the Faculty of Education.

The Interview

Except for one interview done on videocassette, the primary means of data collection were unstructured audio-taped interviews. The interview began with general and informal conversation to allow the participant to feel at ease. The purpose of the study (See Appendix C), an informed consent form (See Appendix D), and questionnaires (See Appendix E) eliciting demographic information were given to each participant to read and complete. The information from the questionnaire provided details to reflect the diversity of backgrounds, such as age, sex, marital status, children, department and specialty, educational history, employment status, and relevant information related to educational or teaching experiences. All of the participants had previous work or volunteer experiences with children prior to or during their educational program. Ethical considerations were met as outlined by Field and Morse (1985). All informants were given opportunity to ask questions, withdraw from the research, were of legal age, were not a captive population and no inherent risks in participating were identified.

Once audio-recording began, the researcher attempted to establish a comfort level with the interviewees and provide background information by asking them to talk about their decision to go into teaching. Several general questions were used as guidelines during the interview. They were:

1. What were your positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education with administration, courses, professors and teaching assistants, and student practicums.

2. Which professors were influential and why?

3. What improvements, if any, are needed in preparing students for work in teaching?

4. How would you go about making changes for improving delivery of service in your program?

5. What was your experience in looking for work and how did the department facilitate that?

The interviews ranged from forty-five to ninety minutes in length.

Another source of the data were notes made by the researcher of observations, impressions, questions and hypotheses that were both subjective and objective. This recording of guided assumptions, known as "memoing" in the grounded theory literature, was intended to reduce drift from the grounding of the categories in the data. A process of memos, recording hunches, theoretical ideas, and reflecting the changes encountered in the analyzing process was done throughout the analysis and kept separately from the rest of the data transcripts (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988; Strauss, 1989).

Data Analysis

The guidelines put forth by Rennie, Phillips and Quartaro (1988), Strauss (1989) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) for use of the constant comparative method were adapted in this study as follows:

1. The tapes were transcribed by a hired typist. The researcher then listened to the tapes as she perused the transcripts. Strauss (1989) comments:

> You may want full transcription also if you have the money to have the tapes transcribed - but then you must listen to the tapes intensely, and more than once anyhow. Why? To remind yourself of things that you observed that you didn't fully record; or to remind yourself of things you noticed during an interview and have now forgotten - or never noticed at the time. Listening as well as transcribing is essential for full and varied analysis. (p.207)

In preparation for the analysis of the data, the verbatim transcripts were typed double-spaced with wide margins and extra copies of each transcript were made. This was done to allow for code words to be noted in the margins and for use of a color-code method to organize the data. Thus, during the open coding phase, meaning units of individual concepts conveyed by the interviewees could be assigned to as many categories as possible to preserve the conceptual richness of the phenomenon.

Rennie, Phillips and Quartaro (1988) note that "The assignment of a given unit to as many categories as possible is referred to as open categorizing" (p.143). The initial stage of analysis involved breaking each transcript up into meaning units which were labelled to closely reflect the language used by the participants. Each meaning unit was given a descriptive label (code) and color-coded to identify similar categories. The meaning units were compared and conceptualized in terms of commonalities. The coded segments were then organized on separate cards that identified each participant and the numbered location of categories that clustered under similar themes. Additional examples of the same conceptual category were placed under these thematic headings. If an analytic unit could not be placed in an existing category, another category was created to accommodate it. Once these units were categorized, color-coded and location was identified, they were laid out on charts with the categories represented in the columns. Individual participants were represented on separate sheets with similar themes represented in rows. This visual array allowed the researcher to examine the relationships amongst the categories and, eventually, helped to depict saturation of the categories.

2. Saturation is when "the analysis of additional protocols reveals no new categories, properties or relationships among them" (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988, p.143). As the new categories emerged or as units emerged that fit existing categories, the researcher began conceptualizing more abstract categories that subsumed the descriptive categories, yet was grounded in them. The theoretical memoranda was being made use of throughout the analysis to conceptualize the theoretical properties of the category:

its dimensions, its relationship to other categories and the conditions under which that category was pronounced or minimized. This process involved a continual returning to the data and the memos until both the descriptive categories and the conceptual categories became theoretically saturated. This work was aided by the assistance of another graduate student who was familiar with grounded theory methodology. The first transcript was independently analyzed by the researcher and the assistant and the analyses were discussed to determined whether or not similar categories were being produced. Indeed, similar categories were being produced and once this was established, the researcher continued the analyses alone.

3. The development of relationships, patterns and processes among categories using the constant comparative method resulted in the identification of more central categories that linked together many other categories. These central categories formed a hierarchical structure that subsumed lower-order categories. Quartaro (1986) notes that the categories are "usually abstract and come out of the language and frame of reference of the analyst rather than the respondent" (p.7).

4. The refinement of these broader constructs and their interrelationships through ongoing memoing, manipulation of the codes, and the elaboration of a "core" category eventually lead toward a set of propositions of the grounded theory. At this point, a

secondary review of the literature was done and the emergent theory written up to illuminate or extend understanding of the phenomena of student experiences.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers are faced with the challenge of developing criteria for evaluating the validity and reliability of their theories by use of procedures that have adequacy and rigor. The difficulty of adapting the empirical concepts of validity and reliability to qualitative research is well documented (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) the validity of a theory cannot be separated from the process by which it is generated. Kirk and Miller (1986) also emphasize that validity and the research process are closely related. Glaser and Strauss contend that because grounded theory is intimately linked to the emergent data, it usually cannot be refuted by more data and replaced with another theory, as would be typical in the quantitative paradigm. Thus, a grounded theory may be continually reformulated, but the theory that is closely linked with its data is not invalidated by such modifications.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the need in all research for criteria that deal with the issue of trustworthiness. In both naturalistic and positivistic paradigms, questions about the "truth value", "applicability", "consistency", and "neutrality" of an inquiry needs to be answered. Lincoln and Guba's model was used in this research to answer the following question in dealing with trustworthiness: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (1985, p.290)? Parallel terms from quantitative research are provided in their work for qualitative research: "The four terms 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability', and 'confirmability' are...the naturalist's equivalents for the conventional terms 'internal validity, 'external validity', 'reliability', and 'objectivity'" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.301). Rennie et al. (1988) recommend that a grounded theory be evaluated according to its believability, adequate comprehensiveness, applicability, and groundedness (the extent to which it is inductively tied to the data). These criteria primarily reflect the extent to which the researcher has written a theory that is compelling and convincing for both participants and readers.

Credibility

Credibility or truth value is identified as the ability to discover and reconstruct the reality of the respondents in a credible way (Field & Morse, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced in this research by following suggestions outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

1. "Member checks" (p.301) were done by having two of the interviewees test the findings for fit. These respondents were

invited to react to the categories and interpretations which evolved from the comparative analysis. Did the findings fit the reality of the respondents?

2. "Triangulation" (p.305) was used to improve the probability of believability. It refers to examining the agreement of the interpretations that emerge from different methods and sources, and negotiating the differences. Thus, multiple sources of information in this study were gathered from theoretical sampling- the use of more than one participants' views- to test out tentative interpretations by searching for negative indicators and new information.

3. "Peer debriefing" (p.308) was implemented through discussion of the findings with colleagues from the Faculty of Education.

4. The findings were read by two individuals who were in their final term in the Faculty of Education but who had not participated in the study. Thus, having similar traits as the participants, did they find the inquiry to be credible?

5. Through memoing (a separate record of the investigator's biases and assumptions), the researcher's assumptions, biases, ideas, and values were identified. Acknowledging biases allowed the researcher to be more vigilant about about the effects of her bias on the findings (Quartaro, 1986).

Transferability

Transferability (the extent to which an inquiry has applicability in other contexts or with other participants) of grounded theories is problematic due to the fact that it is typically conducted on a small number of selected participants. To assist the process of transferability, clear descriptions of the interviewees were provided. However, confidentiality was taken into consideration by setting a limit on the amount of information given concerning the participants. Details that were too descriptive could have led to identification of participants. Quartaro (1986) and Rennie et al. (1988) comment that the very nature of grounded theory does not allow for generalization to other populations. Rennie et al. state that:

> It is intimacy with the phenomenon that grounded theorists seek much more than external criteria of adequacy such as hard evidence of generalizability derived from a random sampling of a large number of individuals. Once again, the object of the approach is to create new theory that is directly tied to the reality of individuals. The object is not to verify the theory so generated beyond the verification yielded by saturation of the categories (p.147).

Instead of being a study that could be generalized, this research provided "the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p.316).

Dependability and Confirmability

The problem of dependability (consistency) and confirmability (neutrality) - representing reliability and objectivity in quantitative research - was handled through the clear documentation of descriptions of individuals, context, decisions and procedures. A separate journal was kept that provided an "audit trail" of the research process and revealed the researcher's first impressions, thoughts, conceptualizations of categories and interpretation of her observations. Also included in the journal were impressions and hypotheses from discussions with participants and peers (Kirk & Miller, 1986). To account for underlying assumptions and methodological decisions, the researcher engaged in reflexivity wherein introspections and ideas were regularly recorded.

All records stemming from the research were kept and included raw data from tape recordings of interviews with informants; data reduction and analysis products, including coding sheets and memos; and data reconstruction and synthesis products, including category development and category relationships (Halpern, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An attempt was made to ensure adequate attention to the issues of validity and reliability through the above measures. Thus, the findings in this study are consistent with meeting the requirements of good qualitative research.

To summarize, this chapter contains a description of grounded theory methodology, concepts important to the method, steps taken to ensure ethical considerations, procedures to implement a grounded theory of student experiences, and discussion and measures of trustworthiness.

IV. RESULTS

Analysis of Transcripts

The analysis of the transcripts went through three phases using the constant comparative method. This involved the simultaneous collection and analysis of the data, resulting in the identification of a number of descriptive categories, conceptualizations, and emerging themes. The initial steps of the data analysis involved open coding, which was the coding of the transcripts on a line-by-line basis to capture the movement from words to conceptual categories. Thus, a sentence or phrase that appeared meaningful in relation to the experience of attending the Faculty of Education was noted as a meaning unit. For example, the sentence "a lot of what they were learning in the courses were not directly applicable to the classroom" involved the highlighting of "learning" and of "not directly applicable to the classroom". Numerous meaning units were generated through analysis of each transcript, producing a rich and complex data base.

The next phase of analysis involved the use of code words that were applied to each incident or meaning unit. This second phase of analysis, known as substantive coding, required the development of conceptual categories through use of increasing abstraction. Thus, the above example was coded as "Applicability of Learning". Data that did not seem relevant, such as " I don't feel comfortable mentioning the names of the professors", were discarded.

As coding and analysis of the transcripts progressed towards increasing abstraction, additional codes and more substantive categories were generated. Examples that reflected the experience of "Applicability of Learning" were placed in a larger sub-category with the heading "Learning Experiences". Since the focus of the study was on both positive and negative experiences, the opposite of a positive heading such as "Learning Experiences" would be applied to those negative experiences (i.e. "Non-learning Experiences) and vice versa. The following descriptive categories were all subsumed under the category "Learning Experiences": applicability of the learning experience; transferability of the learning experience; practicality of the learning experience; related learning; and, reality-based learning. Labels were assigned to various phenomena that would meet the requirements for descriptiveness and exactness of fit.

The third step of coding involved identification of the relationships amongst categories, the development of theoretical constructs and the eventual emergence of the theory grounded in the data. Glaser (1978) noted that this stage of "weaving the fractured data back together again" (p. 116) involved conceptualizing the relationship between the three levels of coding through theoretical construction. In this phase, it became important to make decisions regarding labeling of the categories in a manner that would help formulate the theoretical framework of positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education. Combining academic and clinical knowledge with the data generated from the transcripts assisted in the development of theoretical constructs.

The sheer volume of the data collected during the investigation prevented a thorough discussion of the step-by-step process of the eventual conceptualization of the theory. Nevertheless, the richness, complexity and movement of the data, was adequately described for the reader to make "transferability judgements possible" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.316).

Conceptual Categories

The conceptual categories encapsulated the students' positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education. The word "experience" is defined in this research context by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1981) as:

> **1a:** the usual conscious perception or apprehension of reality or of an external, bodily, or psychic event **b:** facts or events or the totality of facts or events observed **2a:** a direct participation in events **b:** the state or result of being engaged in an activity or in affairs **c:** knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events...**4:**

> something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through (p. 403).

Preliminary analysis of the first transcribed tape, including related memos, revealed, even at this early phase, apparent themes and trends. To demonstrate the richness and complexity of the interviewees' experiences in the Faculty of Education, the conceptual categories teased out regarding negative experiences are presented below from the first transcript analyzed (#001). This transcript was the beginning point of reference for the eventual analysis of the other transcripts. As the three levels of coding were applied to Transcript #001, clusters of themes were labeled and placed into subcategories that conceptualized the properties of the phenomena of "Negative Experiences. Table 1 (See p. 100), provides an overview of "Negative Experiences" from analysis of the first transcript.

Table 1 and the following quote provides a more in-depth description of the beginning theoretical framework regarding "Negative Experiences" in the Faculty of Education.

> In my first year I discovered in many of my colleagues a certain cynicism, colleagues that had spent a year in the faculty, and I asked them what contributed to that cynicism. To them a lot of what they were learning in the courses were not directly applicable to the classroom. I guess, in a general way, that was perhaps my negative experience there (Faculty of Education). A specific example would be micro-teaching....it didn't

> seem to translate well into an experience that would happen in the classroom (#001; Lines: 75-84;95-97).

Due to the rate at which data saturation occurred, only five of the eight interviews were required and used for analysis. The codes were organized in such a manner that three major conceptual categories were produced:

1. Positive Experiences
2. Negative Experiences
3. Restructuring

The data from these conceptual categories were sorted in terms of distinctions. For example, the categories "good teaching qualities" and "learning experiences" were subsumed under Positive Experiences. For purposes of clarity, the subcategory "practicum experiences", which had both negative and positive components, was presented under its own heading.

As the coding progressed from one interview to the next and the emerging categories were evaluated, it started to become apparent that an underlying theme was: whether or not students experienced their learning as being practical and applicable. As used here, **reality-based learning** became the core category that emerged and colored the information in the major categories above. That is, what was seen as Positive Experiences were those occasions in which what was being taught was seen as information that could be transferred to an actual classroom. Negatives were those occasions where that information seemed non-transferable.

Restructuring promoted use of situations that encouraged that reality-based learning and students' philosophy of teaching was strongly influenced by that learning concept. Even though the concept of reality-based learning occurred over and over again, there were clusters of themes unrelated to it. However, these themes were still important to the total experience in the Faculty of Education and were outlined under the appropriate heading.

Positive Experiences

Positive experiences were conceptualized as those experiences that positively impacted students in the Faculty of Education in terms of acquiring the tools, skills, and abilities for becoming a teacher. The cluster of categories that appeared to be related to positive experiences included the following properties:

1. Learning Experiences. These were described by the interviewees as those experiences of learning that were applicable, practical, transferable, relevant, and included higher level learning. Higher level learning involved the use of thinking processes rather than rote-memory as would be required in multiple-choice exams. Thus, courses that stimulated mental processes through discussion and feedback, provided information that could be transferred to the actual classroom, had a real-world focus based on the present-day social context of teaching, and, used practical hands-on strategies were seen as positive experiences where learning occurred. For example:

> On the positive side, the courses that really meant something, were things that had some sort of practical value in the profession itself...(#001; Lines: 152-155).
>
> ....you learn your lesson plans and teaching strategies and management strategies; I really learned a lot...(#002; Lines: 107-109).
>
> I guess we'll start with my positive experiences. I took seven C.I. courses, which are curriculum courses. Most of them were really helpful, especially the ones that were hands-on....You need hands-on to show what you can do with the kids, I think(#004; Lines: 3-7; 14-15).
>
> ....the interaction makes it stick in my head and I learn a lot easier (#004; Lines: 163-164).
>
> Where I got the most practical education was in my Early Childhood because...we did everything hands-on, which is relevant to elementary education...It was all hands-on stuff-no exams-we had projects, so that's how you really learn, is doing projects. I still feel we need more of that (#003; Lines: 108-112; 766-769).

2. Administrative Assistance. The properties of this category involved coherence in the Faculty's goals and approachability of administrative staff. Interviewees found that when the Faculty's goals were clear and consistent, so that there was a fit between philosophy of teaching and practice, their learning experiences were much more enjoyable and positive. Interviewees commented on a match between philosophy of teaching (what they perceived to be the Faculty's goals) and practice:

> They taught us like we are taught to teach. They taught us with the same philosophy; a lot of teachers are

> teaching you to teach a certain way, but they themselves are not teaching this way....It wasn't this contradiction (#003; Lines: 757-764).
>
> ...I think the true role of the courses I was taking was to equip me with information about the educational laws, structure of the curriculum, the salary grid. _____ had a guy come in and explain the salary grid, and I said "Hey, this is great! What do we do after we're out of here?" (#001; Lines: 323-330).
>
> And so now, the second time I took it (the practicum) it was a very positive experience. I had a great professor, he knew you personally and did the placements in keeping with your personality (#002; Lines: 409-413).

Being able to approach staff and get helpful information was also seen as positive. There was an impression, however, that going directly to the top (i.e. the deans) was much more beneficial than going to the staff. Quoting the following provided examples of this impression:

> I found if you went straight to the dean or an associate dean and insisted on talking to them and nobody else, it was okay, they were great (#002: Lines: 261-264).
>
> So I went to the woman up there on the eighth floor, one of the deans to do with the practicums and told her why I needed to wait. It was granted and so I didn't have any problems there. I actually just had a lot of cooperation (#003; Lines: 342-347).

3. Good Teaching Qualities. Students consistently described similar qualities in those professors and cooperative teachers that were seen as having good teaching abilities. Most of the

interviewees felt that the majority of professors in the Faculty of Education displayed good teaching abilities:

> I put that most of the professors in the education department were helpful....There's a lot of courses that sound really dull, but once you get in there, it's okay - it's all up to the professor (#004; Lines: 139-140).
>
> Some of my best professors were in the Faculty of Education. They had a sense of humour, a love of the written word, a love of being able to use intellect in one's mind, a supreme value on that. A sense of adventurism...(#001; 789-794).
>
> Part of that was due to the professor. He was very enthusiastic and he know his stuff....and very involved in what he was teaching....She took a lot of feedback from our experiences....She was herself learning as well....He was excellent and I've never heard anyone say anything bad about him. He makes you love teaching because you can see in him his love of teaching (#002; Lines: 99-103; 117-; 125-126; 137-140).
>
> I had tremendous support from the teachers I had in the education department...I could not have gotten through it without the understanding of the professors. The sensitivity was there....I guess I basically had very positive experiences at the school (#003; Lines: 50-60; 70-72).
>
> The first thing that makes a professor good is when they're practical. When they give you good, practical ideas that you could use and they were realistic in the ideas they gave you (#002: Lines: 174-177).

These abilities included people skills, encouragement of learning, and love of teaching. See Table 2 (See p.101) for an overview of the interviewees' descriptions.

One interviewee coined a phrase, "teachable moment", that highlighted a supportive teaching style. This involved a time when a teacher would move beyond the curriculum requirements and provide support grounded in the students' need. It was a non-academic experience that the majority of interviewees could relate to. In the above case the interviewee was referring to a situation in which he had used that approach during his practicum:

> I had one student who was having a little trouble with the law....so I took him aside and told him what to expect when he went to court...It was one of those little things that, _____, my cooperating teacher, taught me as a teachable moment...that there are many more things going on in a student's life than the material at hand, and a teacher has to be sensitive to that.(#001; Lines: 277-294)

Nevertheless, the essence of a "teachable moment" was often described by the interviewees as being used by professors and cooperative teachers with positive teaching qualities.

Influential in making students' experiences in the Faculty of Education positive were reality-based learning experiences, perceived coherence in the Faculty's goals, approachability and helpfulness of administrative staff, and professors and cooperative teachers who demonstrated positive teaching qualities.

Negative Experiences

Those experiences that interviewees defined as having a negative impact in terms of acquiring the tools, skills, and abilities for becoming a teacher were categorized as negative experiences. As is often the case, individuals are much more verbose when it comes to airing out their grievances. Thus, data on negative experiences in the Faculty were numerous. The properties or subcategories of negative experiences are presented below.

1. Non-learning Experiences. Students were consistent in defining what were non-learning, and therefore negative, experiences during their program of study. As noted earlier, reality-based learning emerged as a central theme that impacted on students' experiences in the Faculty. Thus, what was described as non-learning were situations in which the information received was seen as inapplicable, non-transferable from the course to the real classroom, impractical, artificial, and generally, didactic. Those courses that were overburdened with theoretical matter, to the exclusion of practical, factual instruction was experienced as dull and erudite. A preference was expressed for demonstration (hands-on, manipulatives) and laboratory (seminars and discussion groups) study, rather than purely lecture and textbook instruction. Interestingly, the manner in which information was presented made all the difference. A course that seemed purely theoretical to a student, but that was presented in a manner that was experienced as

applicable was given high praise. Teaching style made all the difference. Frustration was experienced with courses that seemed unrealistic or inapplicable, involved rote-memory, repetition of material, and multiple-choice exams. Multiple-choice exams were usually experienced as learning how to "beat the system" rather than learning necessary information on acquiring teaching abilities. The artificiality of the grading system was another area that did not promote learning according to some interviewees. The following quotes give a flavor of that sense of frustration:

> Another thing I've had problems with is the grading system. Your grades are set - a professor's average for the first year has to be 5.8 and then increasing each year. I find that artificial; some classes will be higher and some a little lower (#008; Lines: 495-501).
>
> There were some, for example...were mostly lecture. I found you didn't learn very much on how to teach it when you're just sitting there listening to the teacher talk all the time (#004; Lines: 7-12).
>
> Here's another example, you're teaching your peers - there's no discipline problems; everybody is quiet and listening to you; you have no kid who is falling asleep on his desk or shuffling paper. It's not realistic for this reason (#001; Lines: 372-377).
>
> Of course with your big classes and stuff you have these multiple-choice....I just didn't learn a lot from taking those tests....But then I didn't really connect with what she was doing. It was just kind of from the textbook(#003; Lines: 114-116; 129-130; 445-447).

> Yet they were testing us on pure rote-memory. In other words we learned the information, but we did not learn how to manipulate that information into a coherent concept....But again, that's the system, a classroom with about 150 students; what are you going to do with 150 test papers to mark or computer score them (#001; Lines: 684-685; 687-690; 692-695).

Interviewees commented on their attitudes in courses where they did not experience learning and instead found ways to "beat the system":

> All I did was kept taking the test over and over again and the same questions popped up. It would provide you with the correct answer when you got it wrong....As far as learning any of the concepts that were presented, they went in one brain cell and out the other (#001; Lines: 702-709).

> I just bear with it....I don't want to learn lecture material; this is a very bad attitude, but if I'm going to get tested on it, then I'll know it. But if I'm not, then I don't worry about it because it's not interesting to me (#004; Lines: 167; 171-176).

> Actually, I found I spent more time because you had to know what you were doing; you just don't have to talk your way out of an exam. With exams all you have to do is know your stuff for a while, and then you can just forget it(#008; Lines; 201-205).

The following quote encapsulated the interviewees' disappointment with the some of the non-learning aspects of their courses:

> I found that basically my first three years of education were totally useless because you're in a university learning theory that you don't actually use in the classroom. They're unrealistic, I don't know, maybe they've lost touch with what kids do (#002; Lines: 61-66).

2. Discontinuity of Learning. This category referred to those experiences where interruptions occurred in the flow or continuity of learning. The timing in which certain situations occurred often made all the difference as to whether learning did or did not occur. For example, the timing of practicum placements:

> I remember at the beginning taking the courses through the first practicum _____, and we were out in a school, it was too early (#003; Lines: 101-103).
>
> If you're only going to have twelve weeks in your course, I think you should have an additional six weeks provided in the third year just to get you in and get the basics rooted into everybody (#008; Lines: 298-302).

or practicum callbacks:

> Okay, put it (callback) at the end of the practicum...Let's build that continual eight weeks....It just broke the continuity, and it especially broke the continuity of learning for those kids....I felt I had lost my momentum....it also broke the continuity in the teaching aspect of it (#001; Lines: 405-432).
>
> ...and that wasn't long enough because as soon as you got into it, you were done (#004; Lines: 40-42).

In the above examples, teaching (and thus, learning) flow was interrupted. Adjustments, such as turning the class over to the cooperative teacher during a one week callback and starting again on return, disrupted integration and completion of the teaching experience.

For other students, gaps in learning occurred due to poor preparation in training for becoming teachers:

> I didn't really connect with the curriculum, this was a grade two I was in. If we had been in classrooms doing more, I don't think I would have felt as alienated (#003; Lines 442-445).
>
> I didn't learn enough. Now here's a whole other area: evaluations. You need specific little things to do for a while, while your in a classroom previous to that, she didn't do enough for me for evaluation. So I'm hazy...(#003; Lines: 545-550).
>
> ...and there was really nothing on your list, just mostly psychology and learning rather than the actual language arts in the classroom, like strategies and stuff like that....and it wasn't enough for me, not in a classroom....I would be frightened right now...because I haven't had that experience (#004: Lines: 27-34; 82-84).

Underlying the interviewees' sense of discontinuity of learning was a focus on the need for actual experiences that could be translated to the classroom. Their sense was that not having these applicable and transferable experiences created a break in their learning to become teachers. As well, being forced to take courses that would not normally have been taken, added to that sense of discontinuity in their learning:

> ...and I took courses that were just a requirement; but I mean what am I going to do with (them)...and I don't need them...I don't see the relevance of them. Why don't they give us more education courses so you're more prepared to teach?...I just don't think they're very useful at all. If you had more curriculum courses for example it would be better(#004; Lines: 325-342).

3. Administrative Difficulties. Scarcity of resources and options was one of the properties of administrative difficulties that negatively impacted the interviewees. Students were aware of the present day realities caused by major cutbacks in educational financing. Nevertheless, there were many examples of their frustration regarding the organizational arrangements that they perceived as being a result of these cutbacks. A common complaint was with the size of the Faculty and the impression that the Faculty was too large to meet individual student needs. The results of combining a large Faculty with budgetary cutbacks seemed to the interviewees to have created a shortage of courses and/or difficulties in getting into courses, slow processing of registration and other documentation, errors in recordkeeping, sharing of practicum teaching, continuous changes in programming and, inadequate information processing. For example:

> You know as well as I there's major cutbacks now and the courses that are shown in the calendar do not necessarily

> correspond to courses that are offered. I wanted to get into teaching the micro-computer in the classroom, and I couldn't get in because it was full. I wanted to get into a couple of other Ed Foundation courses and couldn't get in because they were full, weren't offered , or were only offered to vocational ed students. Given the cash-strapped situation of the university, there's obviously going to be a shortage of courses (#001; Lines: 638-650).

> I lost two weeks because there were two students from the U of A in each classroom, so we had to take turns teaching. When we finally got everything together it ended. So we could have spent a little more time there (#004; Lines: 47-51).

In some cases, the continuous changes in programming brought about gaps between administrative staff information and calendar information that jeopardized some students' ability to adequately complete their programs. A commonly heard complaint in the faculty amongst students was the difficulties experienced with the records staff. Following are excerpts from the interviews identifying these grievances:

> I find that there's a lot of hassles between course requirements. Let's say you're in your fourth year and in your first year you took two courses that at that time were considered two different courses. All of a sudden you're in your fourth year and they've changed the requirements so that those two courses are considered the same one and you can only get credit for one course (#002: Lines: 272-281).

There's no guideline; it's whatever they say that goes. From the time I started university until the end, I had gone up there eight times, checking what courses I needed. I found that the calendar didn't really give you enough information about what you need, because it changes every year. I'd get up there - I went three times just in my last year between September and February, and they said I had all my courses to graduate. They call me on the Friday - I'm supposed to graduate on the Monday - and they say that I don't have all my courses, that I'm short two credits....I went back there, and they said, "We have five hundred students to look after; sometimes we make mistakes,", that's a quote....I just wanted to make sure because one of my girlfriends had graduated in 1991 and she had to take an extra spring course because they screwed her up too. I was in a panic and it was already too late (#004; Lines: 233-245; 252-254; 265-269).

At that time I wasn't aware that I had a faculty consultant...who comes out to observe you and help you with any problems, I didn't even know that they existed. I phoned the department and every level I knew of to try to get out of the situation, nothing was happening....Finally, I just quit. I filled out all the papers and the next day my faculty consultant was out there and willing to help me. But by then I was so frustrated and angry that nobody would help me, I just said " You can all go to hell, I quit." I think it's really pathetic that they would let a student get to that point before they offer to help (#002; Lines: 371-378; 383-391).

On top of my negative experiences list is the eighth floor - the women up there. Everyone who I talk to have the same opinion. They'll only help you as far as they want and not any further. They're very, very crabby up there. I'd go up there and say that I need to check if I have all the courses. So they check it and tell me what I need to get, and I ask if I can take something else instead, and

> they say yes. When I go up the next day and ask the same thing, they get all crabby and tell me I can't....you almost need it written down and signed for you, because you're always getting different information (#004; Lines: 204-215; 226-228).

> I guess the most frustrating thing - and I didn't have some of the experiences that some people did - was with the eighth floor. There was this atmosphere of snobbiness and arrogance, like we were just students and to quit bothering them (#003; Lines: 333-338).

Another area of frustration was with the minor selection process and the quota system. Both were seen as being impractical and not serving the purposes they should. The minor selection process required hours of standing in line without any guarantee that one would be able to get into the minor specialty of their choice. Since a minor was required, students who could not get into their minor of choice, felt they were forced to take whatever came available. In this situation, time and money was spent to acquire skills in an area not of their choosing. As for the quota system, students who had already invested two years into the education program faced the possibility of not being accepted in their third year. Much anxiety was created and some students who did not want to wait until August to find out their status made alternate arrangement. Obviously, those students who were interviewed had been accepted into their third year. Nevertheless they expressed their aggravation at a system that seemed incomprehensible and without reason. Commenting on the quota system, Interviewee #008 noted:

> ...the quota system, it took way too long to find out if you were accepted. You were biting your nails right up until August. So everyone else knows except for all of us waiting to find out if you're accepted or not....Everyone had to wait for that long whether or not they made it past the core. I don't know what their criteria was for passing people to the core. I know a couple of people that didn't apply because they thought they were toasted anyways because of low marks.... If they don't want so many people in the faculty, then they should decline them in the first year, not in the third such as they've done. I feel that if you've made it in and your making the grades, then you really shouldn't be quoted out after putting two years of your life into it (Lines:61-65; 82-88; 489-495).

Another commented on the minor selection process:

> First of all we had no information, we got a sheet that said these are the minors - pick one. That's the first we had ever heard of it. We didn't know what they were. Then you choose one and stand in line and hope that you get it. What if you're in music and you're just the greatest, and you don't get your music minor? I thought that system was really bad....Then after that, after you've chosen this minor and gotten into it, you phone and get into these courses and some of them you can't even get into, the one's that you need for your minor....Priority wasn't given to the people who had it as their minor or major....Especially after you've stood in line for over two hours to get it (#004; Lines: 344-352; 368-372; 380-381; 384-385).

Finally, frustration was expressed regarding what was viewed as a contradiction in what interviewees perceived to be the

Faculty's goals. They felt there was a discrepancy between philosophy and practice and most often saw this discrepancy in what they felt should be reality-based learning (their own preference in terms of what the Faculty should emphasize in their curriculum goals):

> They involved things that weren't really pertinent to teaching....It was designed to understand and realize what we thought our philosophy of education was, so that we could understand ourselves, the way we teach, so as to analyze it and be reflective. However, the class did not do that. We basically looked at three different possible philosophies as rigid structures, and if you wanted you could integrate them because the text said you could. If you didn't agree with what the professor said and how he wanted to do it, you didn't do well in the class (#008; Lines:237-239; 245-255).
>
> It was hypocritical of what I learned in 171, We talked about higher level thinking and processes, knowledge evaluation, etc. But it was hypocritical of them to say that, yes, as teachers we should always encourage that higher level of thinking. Yet, they were testing us on pure-rote memory....It just seems paradoxical that a faculty which values learning and wants its wards to value learning in their students, it's process, way of testing, doesn't seem to enhance your value learning (#001; Lines: 678-684; 709-713).

4. Poor Teaching Qualities. Interviewees linked some of their more negative experiences in the faculty with what they perceived as the poor quality of teaching of some of their professors and cooperative teachers during their practicums. As with their descriptions of good teaching qualities, an overview of their

descriptions of poor teaching qualities was presented in Table 3 (See p.102). Following are some excerpts describing those qualities:

> Those that were not good were cynical about the system; that so many students are in the Faculty of Education; that really what they're doing is just a job....The professors that just stand in front and dictate/lecture until you've got notes that are so thick you just can't do it anymore - don't seem to me to really respect the fact that the students are there (#001: Lines: 804-808; 817-821).
>
> From what I heard from other people, was that he was a very - he had a harshness about him - his exams were very hard and I thought I'm not getting into this. It made me angry. Why do they want to make exams hard? Why don't they want to make the experience a learning experience, instead of going for "I'm going to kill you with the exams" kind of thing. That was one of the things I heard a lot of. He didn't seem to allow for any participation...(#003: Lines: 156-165).
>
> I think it was how it was taught. I think they should structure it more. Organize it so that they're all teaching the same basic concepts and ideas. Instead of having such a free-range as to what they could do. I'm not even sure the professors knew what they were teaching (#008; Lines: 135-141).
>
> There's a lot of other professors that act like they don't love children and that they're just part of the job that you have to put up with (#002; Lines: 195-198).

Poor quality of teaching was perceived as involving a lack of people skills, discouraging the learning process, and displeasure at having to teach.

Table 4 (See p.103) provided an expanded overview of the categories which were much more varied than categories related to positive experiences. Note that Table 1 (See p.100) was an initial analysis of the first transcript. As coding moved from level to level, adjustments were made to better conceptualize the central themes arising from analysis of all the interviews. Some categories were dropped or subsumed under a more descriptive heading. As readers compare the two Tables, they will be better able to follow the process used by the researcher in the development of conceptual categories.

Practicum Experiences

Practicums added another dimension to the interviewees experiences in the Faculty of Education. For clarity, practicum experiences, though both negative and positive, were listed under a separate heading. Practicums were experienced as the most practical and useful area of study for becoming teachers. However, as well as receiving the highest commendation, interviewees had concerns regarding those experiences that sometimes minimized the learning potential of their practicums.

1. Practicum Pluses. The practicums provided reality-based learning: experiential learning of the social and cultural contexts of schools, classrooms, children, young people, different races, development of own teaching abilities and style and, integration of

prior learning. Over and over again, participants commented on the value of their practicums:

> I learned the most during my practicums. Basically, everything I plan on using in the future as a teacher came from here (#002; Lines: 72-75).
>
> I'm ready now, but I think I'm only ready because of my practicums. I would say that maybe only 30% of my courses and my practicums prepared me....If we didn't have the practicums, we'd be lost out there because that's basically what shows you what to do(#004: Lines: 425-428; 435-437).
>
> The practicum. I learned more about schools and students and young people and myself, my own abilities in working with young people, and working with colleagues, my cooperating teacher and such than I ever have. My entire teaching ability almost rests on those two practicums (#001; 737-743).

What added to the positive aspects of interviewees' practicums was the assistance received from professors and cooperating teachers:

> I have to thank the Faculty of Education or the people who placed me with _____, I've never met a more genuine person, a more skillful teacher and empathetic guy. After ____ years, he's been teaching since _____, and still has time for students. He's not cynical about young people. He still has time for a student teacher who has just entered the school and is scared (#001; Lines: 745-753).

> My first practicum, she was a very nice teacher, a very kind person, she had a nice aura about her....she was very warm, very accepting of me (#003; Lines: 431-436).

> I have an excellent cooperating teacher. Every time I had to do a lesson she writes down my strengths and weaknesses. I find that very helpful. She lets me know what I need to improve while giving me positive feedback at the same time. She basically let me have free-reign of how I wanted to teach (#008; Lines: 413-418).

> _____ told us that we wouldn't know our placements until three weeks into the course because he wanted to get to know us first so that he could try and match teachers with students whose personalities would work together rather than against each other, such as I had (#002; 413-419).

2. Practicum errors. Some of the criticisms around practicums had to with the manner in which they were organized; such as, the period in which the practicum was taken, the number and variety of practicums, the length of time in the practicum, breaks in the practicum, and student-teacher matches. Here is what the interviewees said:

> ...we can get into our student teaching experiences. They need to be a little more numerous, a little closer together; not little chunks and then a year later another little thing you need....I would have liked more practicums....With the practicum, it would be nice to have it for a whole semester....and its very different out there now, and I don't think that we are really prepared for what is out there....The behavior, the attitudes of kids towards learning....You still find kids that want to learn,

> but there's a lot of disruptions going on in the classrooms. I think we need to be educated more... (#003; Lines: 364-369; 488-494; 506-511).
>
> One downfall is that there isn't enough time in the practicums. Another thing I think they should provide is a 6-week practicum in the third year....It would be a good way to help build your skills needed for the fourth year. At first, it's a slow integration into the classroom, allowing you to develop your skills along the way. With six weeks in the third year, you have more time to hone your skills, so you're not as green when you enter the classroom (#008; Lines: 226-229; 320-327).
>
> Some other things, the practicums weren't great. I think we should have more practicums, even though I know we can't - but that would be my choice. More for a longer time, because we just had an observation, then we had a four week practicum where we actually taught, and that wasn't really long enough enough, because as soon as you got into it , you were done....I hear that they're doing a new thing now. They're doing twelve weeks total at one school, which I don't think is good either. That would be awful because you would have experience with one class (#004; Lines: 34-42; 63-68).

Regarding matches:

> The very first day I went out and observed my teacher. I came back and said that it wasn't going to work. She's too different for me, I don't believe in anything she believes in, I can't deal with this woman, please find me another placement. She was very critical and ran a dictatorship type classroom. I would never teach like that, it just wasn't working. It was a very negative experience (#002; Lines: 344-349; 365-368).

And regarding practicum callbacks:

> The callback during phase three was totally negative....I knew a lot of people who just skipped it. They said it was absolutely useless. I don't know why they were taking us out of the classroom because it tended to break the momentum you had been building. You had just gotten to know the students, you were getting comfortable teaching your material, getting comfortable in the school and establishing a relationship with your cooperating teacher and your faculty consultant and all of a sudden you're back in this callback with your professor going through the same old stuff that you had taken (#001; Lines: 233-234; 239-251).

Practicum experiences were both positive (most learning acquired in the faculty) and negative (organizational logistics). Following the course of interviewees' positive, negative, and practicum experiences also brought about expressions of changes they would make to improve services in the faculty. The final major category was labeled "restructuring".

Restructuring

Restructuring refers to the suggestions for programs improvements interviewees made in response to their negative experiences in the Faculty of Education. These suggestions may or may not be possible to implement, however, they provide the reader and the Faculty with some useful information for better service delivery.

1. Course improvements. Interviewees presented through many examples the desire to have their courses be more relevant, practical, and applicable. In the larger classes, seminars and small

discussion groups would be mandatory. Students felt they needed to have input and give feedback to make their learning more meaningful:

> ...these large curriculum courses need to be broken down into small groups...more hands-on stuff....Ed Admin. I can see as basically that you have to transmit all this information. All the other courses need to be very hands-on (#003; Lines: 126-128; 136-138).
>
> In a few of my courses we had seminars...there were 200 people in every class and it was broken down into 16, and I thought those were great! Instead of just listening to a professor lecture, you get to actually talk with people in your class....and everyone said what they thought about different issues, which was really helpful....I think if they could have more of these it would really help - everyone just loved them (#004; Lines; 94-100; 105-107; 114-116).

Interviewees wanted more curriculum courses, classroom management courses, and courses tied into the realities of the present day social contexts, such as multiculturism. In short, students wanted courses that would prepare them for entry into the "real-world" of teaching:

> I think all of these practical tools is what the courses should really be for....Give us an idea about what's down the line as far as jobs are concerned....They need a course that will prepare students for their entry into the school....Instead provide a launchpad for those greenhorns who are about to enter the schools and haven't got a clue as to what is involved and the responsibility inherent to the person at the front of the classroom....Students

> should be provided with what is going on in education today (#001; Lines: 335-337; 360-369; 379-383).
>
> I just don't think that they (general arts courses) are very useful at all. If you had more curriculum courses for example, it would be better (#004; Lines 340-344).
>
> Special Ed's were really good for the amount of mainstream and integration that's going on now. I think you really need that. They could even focus a little more on the Special Ed courses for everyone, not just your Special Ed focus areas. Even in your so-called "regular classroom" there's a variance in ability from high to low (#008; Lines: 216-223).
>
> ...This is what I like about the Early Childhood, they teach the course exactly how they want us to teach children. I would have liked to at least be in a school for some assignment every semester in something, whether it be Social Studies or whatever. I think a lot of our curriculum instruction can be spent maybe teaching a few things in a classroom in math or social studies. For me, that's how I make it concrete, that's how it connects for me (#003; Lines: 380-390).
>
> So for those students who didn't have the experience that we had, they needed to be out there ahead of time to just get a general feel....I think that being exposed to classrooms more throughout our education is what we need, very much so (#003; Lines: 516-528).

2. Practicum Improvements. As noted, under practicum experiences, practicums would be more numerous, more varied and lengthier. Through gradual exposure, anxiety would be reduced and a more natural, integrative progression into the experience of teaching would occur. Expressions like "trial by fire" and "sink or

swim" were descriptive of students' sense of being thrown into something unfamiliar:

> Another thing I think they should provide is a 6-week practicum in the third year....It would be a good way to help build your skills needed for the fourth year. At first, it's a slow integration into the classroom, allowing you to develop your skills along the way. With six weeks in the third year, you have more time to hone your skills, so you're not as green when you enter the classroom (#008; Lines: 226-229; 320-327).

Interviewee #001 made these suggestions regarding the callbacks:

> I'm not a professor, I wouldn't know how to structure something like that, but I would at least provide another measure of self-reflection of what you've learned, what kind of teacher you are now and in a practical way what worked and what didn't work and why it didn't work and where kids are coming from now. One of the basic things I learned is that I, as a teacher, If I'm going to be effective, I'd better be very intuitive towards how families are changing....I would have loved to discuss that with my peers. Or even bringing teachers in and having a round-table discussion with some accountability of course, like a paper (Lines: 508-524).

3. Administrative Improvements. Obviously, the resources and options that have been reduced due to cutbacks are difficult to amend. In other areas, however, changes were suggested that could realistically be implemented.

a. Entry requirements:

> I think they should tighten the regulations a little bit....Maybe an interview asking why - they interview applicants for med school - why wouldn't they interview people who are applicants as teachers?...Provide people who are entering the profession with some kind of essay to write, maybe an explanation in essay form as to what their reasons are for entering, why they want to be a teacher, perhaps producing a resume, a criminal record check....to force upon the candidates the inherent responsibility of the profession (#001; Lines: 583-598).
>
> If they don't want so many people in the faculty, then they should decline them in the first year, not in the third year, such as they've done (#008; Lines: 489-492).

b. Minor selection process:

> I think there should be free choice about what minors you want. Because that's what you're truly interested in....Priority wasn't given to people who had it as their major or minor....I think the star sheets would be very beneficial (#004; Lines: 362-365; 380-381;385-386).

c. Contradictory information/changing program requirements:

> You almost need it written down and signed for you because you're always getting different information....I think maybe they could send a printout to students every year to show us what they show us having and what we need to get. Or maybe even make it more specific in the calendar....I know they do that for some of the faculties, but not for education. Maybe give the person a copy of everything (#004; 225-228; 271-278).
>
> ...they didn't know what to do or they weren't informed ahead of time and they lost a semester....They could get a lot more specific, they could lay it right out and say this is where you need to go for this....Where you have specific

> people where it's laid right out. And have that in your student booklet or up on the fifth floor by the elementary education (#003; Lines: 873-875; 892-902).
>
> When they look at requirements for a degree, they should take into consideration what you were told when you started (#002; Lines: 301-303).
>
> I would get some kind of training so they would all know what they were doing, and I'd certainly get them all to do the same thing. It seems to me they haven't all been trained at the same time. Maybe they could have more meetings together so they're all working around the same guidelines (#004; Lines: 290-296).

d. Negative staff attitudes:

> I think also that they have a desk job and get disturbed from that. Maybe get two people who just work the counter all the time, and the other two can work the desks. Then they have specific jobs (#004; Lines: 313-317).
>
> Maybe encourage these women to be more sociable and friendlier, less condescending (#003; Lines: 357-359).

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to label the concepts which accounted for the positive and negative experiences of preservice teachers who studied in the Faculty of Education. Through the analysis of taped-interview transcripts, conceptual categories were used to label the phenomena. Through use of the constant comparative method, numerous themes emerged, relationships between conceptual categories were linked, and abstraction of the concepts were developed. Saturation of the data occurred with the fifth transcript that was analyzed, that is, no new themes or categories emerged during analysis of the fifth transcript.

The central themes for the phenomena of Positive Experiences were **learning experiences**, **administrative assistance**, and **good teaching qualities**. For Negative Experiences, the themes were **non-learning experiences**, **practicum errors**, **discontinuity of learning**, **administrative difficulties** and, **poor teaching qualities**. And finally, major categories for the phenomena of Restructuring were **course improvements**, **practicum improvements**, and **administrative improvements.** Interviewees perceptions of their experiences in the Faculty of Education was influenced by a dominant philosophy labeled **reality-based learning**. When interviewees sensed that the information they were acquiring could be translated into actual, practical and applicable information for the "real-world" of teaching or could be used to achieve their own administrative goals in the faculty, then experiences were seen as positive. The opposite was true of negative experiences. Their suggestions for restructuring were also influenced by their reality-based philosophy.

With the identification of the above themes and their properties, a theory began to emerge grounded in the data. Integration of the conceptual categories, their relationships, and connections with the existing literature is developed in the final chapter.

V. DISCUSSION

Limitations of the Grounded Theory Methodology

Before discussing the conclusions of the study, it is necessary to pay attention to the method used. The goal of this study was to develop theory that legitimately reflected those factors that in the participants' perceptions of their student experiences in the Faculty of Education were seen as positive or negative. This goal was not as simple, as it was appealing, since participants do not always recognize what influences them. Stiles (1991) suggests that researchers should not:

> expect study participants to articulate a good theory -- to provide the senex version. Research participants may have no better access than observing social scientists to the causes of their behavior. And they are likely to have fewer conceptual tools for constructing a theory. On the other hand, although people may not know why, they do know what..."What questions elicit material of which clients have direct knowledge (p.21).

Thus, Stiles recommends that even though the participants can provide the researcher with the relevant information, the researcher must interpret that information to develop an explanatory theory.

Subjectivity. One aspect of the grounded theory approach to research is that it emphasizes the interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon being investigated. Quartaro (1986) refers to her own research:

> As the analysis proceeds through successive levels of abstraction, however, the researcher's contribution becomes more difficult to separate from the emerging data. At this point the investigator becomes a shaping influence on the developing investigation. More abstract categories develop according to the data but also according to the knowledge and experience of the researcher....The analysis is colored by the perspective of the specific researcher (p.20).

Due to this intimate connection with the material, a control procedure was used to monitor the perceptions of the researcher borne on the interview transcripts. One of the interviewees and two non-participants who were also students in the Faculty were asked to study the findings for fit. Their conclusions were that the findings did adequately reflect their experiences in the Faculty. Nevertheless, this procedure did not preclude the possibility that the researcher produced a subjective interpretation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) are not concerned with the subjectivity of interpretations. They maintain that though different sets of analysts may emphasize different aspects of the same phenomena, differing interpretations will all be valid if each is grounded in the data. Hence, the method does not necessarily provide a complete portrayal of the phenomenon under examination, though it is designed to yield portrayals of facets of it.

Transferability. Apart from the validity of the portrayal of positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education among the interviewees, there is also the question of the representativeness of that portrayal. Thus, grounded theorists are always faced with the question: If this study were to be repeated, would the same results be generated? It is improbable that situations whose conditions exactly match those of the original study would be found so that the findings could be reproduced. However, transferability is established in the grounded approach by comparing selected representatives from different groups of data sources. Since the object of the approach to research in grounded theory is designed to generate theory more than to verify it, the aim is for working assumptions that relate to a particular context, rather than for reproducibility or generalizability, as is common in quantitative studies.

In this investigation, the comparison was between the positive and negative experiences among preservice teachers in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta who had recently graduated or were in their last term of study. Strictly speaking, the transferability of this portrayal should be limited to those interviewees in this particular study, or at least from this particular faculty. The fact that a small, selected group of individuals were studied is not problematic since the study's goal was to produce an accurate portrayal of a certain aspect of the phenomena and develop a theory grounded in the experiences of the participants.

Premises of the Theory

1. Students will experience both positive and negative aspects of their program of study. They will be able to identify what was positive and what made that aspect of their program positive and what was negative and what made that aspect of their program negative.

2. Students' perception of positive and negative will be influenced by their expectations and personal philosophies.

3. The administrators, professors, and staff of the faculty will be influential in affecting students' perceptions of positive and negative.

The Theory

1. Interviewees seemed able to identify areas of influence regarding their perspectives of positive and negative experiences. The opportunities to have "learning experiences", receive administrative assistance and guidance, and experience aspects of good teaching qualities significantly influenced their perceptions of positive experiences in the Faculty of Education. They consistently

identified their practicum experiences as the most useful in aiding them to achieve their goals of becoming teachers. Negative experiences were described as being those situations where no real learning occurred, inadequate administrative assistance, including lack of clear guidelines, were experienced and aspects of poor teaching qualities were received. These negative experiences minimized their potential for achieving their goals of acquiring all the necessary tools to feel confident in their teaching endeavours. Thus, their suggestions for improvements (restructuring) in the Faculty related to emphasizing the properties of positive experiences and eliminating the properties of negative experiences.

2. Interviewees expectations of their program of study was that they would receive training in and acquire the skills and abilities necessary to teach "out in the real world". Their personal philosophies on teaching was grounded in reality-based learning: learning that was practical, applicable, relevant and transferable. Experiences grounded in their basic philosophy were, therefore, perceived as being positive, while experiences contrary to reality-based learning were perceived as being negative.

3. Administrators, professors and staff were influential in determining student's overall evaluation of positives and negatives. "Common-sense" attributes in dealing with students, such as good people-skills, went a long way in viewing the Faculty in a positive light. In general, interviewees felt that their program of study was

positive due to the many individuals they encountered with these attributes. Students became frustrated in situations where the Faculty's perceived goals (based on interviewees' expectations of what the Faculty should provide for them during their program of study) did not always fit with practice. For example, disregard of student's practical needs due to poor administrative decision-making; inadequate learning environment due to departmental size and/or professors with poor teaching abilities; and contradictory information, inadequate assistance and negative attitudes from departmental staff; all contributed to the interviewees' beliefs that Faculty goals did not match practice.

4. Interviewees perceptions of their experiences and recommendations for changes to the program were consistently influenced by the central concept of reality-based learning.

In order to trace this dominant philosophy, it is helpful to understand how the participants came to choose their particular course of study (teaching) and their goals for entering the Faculty of Education. Interviewees names were changed to ensure anonymity.

Gary was taking his general arts degree in social and political sciences and had not yet decided what to do when it was completed. He had started during that time to tutor his brother in math and was quite successful at it. External influences, such as his father's praise of his abilities to teach in such a clear and patient manner, and his own internal discovery of enjoying what he was doing led to his decision to get an after degree in teaching. It was very important to Gary to acquire the necessary, practical information that would make him a "better teacher".

Tammy had entered university hoping to go into speech pathology. Through the process of elimination, with having to choose between a pre-year in science or in education, Tammy went into education. She had also just started working in an after-school care and discovered her pleasure in interacting with and teaching children. She decided to remain in the Education Faculty. Tammy's approach to her world was very direct and common-sense and her expectations of the Faculty were that they would also teach her how to teach in a clear and direct manner.

Laura's introduction to becoming a teacher came as a result of teaching "being a natural extension as a parent". She was very involved with her children and their schooling. She expressed her desire in the interview to receive hands-on, practical and concrete information during her program of study.

Richard said he "fooled around for four years with his arts degree" searching for a profession he could get into. He remembered teachers during his formative years who were influential and left a lasting impact. He decided to join the "Study Buddy" program and explore the idea of going into teaching. He found the kids enjoyable and education to be challenging and interesting. Richard wanted his education to be pertinent; he wanted to be able to apply what he had learned directly into the actual classroom.

The final participant, Kris, entered the Faculty of Education because she had wanted to be a teacher since she was a twelve-year old and was very clear and focused on her goal. Kris' greatest difficulty with her program was that she felt the majority of her coursework did not provide her with the necessary practical tools for applying her skills as a teacher.

It was observed by the researcher that maturity level may have made a difference in terms of the interviewees' responses and their overall goals in the Faculty. Older students (thirty plus) seemed to take a broader perspective regarding their educational goals and expectations of the Faculty. For example, they seemed to be more aware of budgetary restrictions and limitations in what the Faculty could achieve despite the Faculty's intent to provide complete and adequate services. Their views seemed more balanced in response to their positive and negative experiences. Younger interviewees (under thirty) seemed much more focused on what their expectations had been prior to entering the Faculty and whether or not these had been met during their program of study.

Throughout coding of the transcripts, example after example was given by the interviewees of their need for more practical, hands-on, relevant and applicable sources of learning how to teach. Reality-based learning was the main influence on whether an experience was seen as positive or negative. Common-sense approaches in administrative organization and in professors' presentation of information was favored. Breakdown in perceived faculty goals and actual practice was experienced as the reason for such negative experiences as non-learning situations, inconsistent and contradictory information and negative staff attitudes. Reality-based focus (practical, relevant, applicable, transferable), whether in professors' teaching style, educational programming, information processing, or practicum-teaching was the major determinant of whether an experience in the Faculty was seen as positive or negative.

Fit with Existing Literature

The theory that positive and negative experiences were influenced by a reality-based philosophy is partially supported by some investigators of teacher education. For example, Zahorik (1987), in his study on teachers' sources of learning, found that more useful sources of learning for teachers were those that had the qualities of being specific, immediate and providing personal knowledge of particular problems and teaching situations. As well, under the phenomena of positive experiences, interviewees saw learning experiences as being those in which the courses were relevant and the professors displayed good teaching qualities.

An in-depth case study done by Edwards (1982) on the clinical preservice experience (practicums) resulted in a number of general conclusions; two of which are relevant to this study. One is that "Craft knowledge and 'common sense' are the basis of most decisions regarding specific clinical experiences" and the other is that "one common assumption underlies clinical teacher education: practical in-classroom experience necessarily contributes to the development of better teachers" (p.89).

Hearn (1985), noted that in general, his findings indicated that stimulating course work and good teaching ability were the prime criteria for overall departmental satisfaction, rather than faculty availability and or student/student interaction. This view is reflected in the participants' descriptions of positive teaching qualities.

It was also found that similar sentiments were being echoed in Gettys' (1990) qualitative case study of three student interns in a one year practicum, as those of interviewees in this study:

> ...but all three stated that they felt that the year long internship had prepared them better than a semester of student teaching would have. All three of the interns who were first-year teachers at the time of the interviews stressed that practical experience had been far more valuable than their courses in general....They also identified the importance of a successful match between the intern and the cooperating teacher that the intern was assigned to.... The first-year teachers felt

> that their internship was a strength, especially their relationship with their co-operating teachers....the internship appears to have paved the way for a smoother transition into full-time teaching (pp. 10-12).

Bolster (1983), in his article, "Toward a More Effective Model of Research on Teaching", outlines how teachers come to know about teaching. Through his own experience as a teacher and conversations with teacher-colleagues, Bolster concluded that:

> the most important influence on teacher's knowledge of their craft is that it is formulated and determined in a classroom that demands specific categories of knowledge derived from the uses it must serve. The structure of the teaching environment - typically one instructor with twenty-five to thirty-five young people in a classroom - requires that teachers function consistently as situational decision makers; the knowledge that they deem most important will be derived from that process (p.296).

Preservice teachers (the participants of this study) reflect a similar bias; the desire to receive "specific categories of knowledge derived from the uses it must serve". Situations during their program of study that emphasized that reality-based philosophy were, not surprisingly, identified as being positive. Bolster adds that:

> Principles are believed to be true when they give rise to actions that "work". For example, when I began teaching eighth grade after a dozen years as a university instructor, I experienced success only when I stopped trying to derive my instructional strategies from theories of early adolescence and curriculum development, and began basing them on what had and had not been effective in previous class sessions (p.298).

What interviewees are saying about what "works" for them - what is seen as a positive experience in the Faculty - is a reality-based focus to their learning.

Touching on Bean and Bradley's (1986) study on satisfaction and performance, they consistently found that "satisfaction had a greater influence on performance than performance had on satisfaction. This finding is contrary to most studies which assume that GPA causally influences satisfaction" (p.403). What their findings seem to indicate is that students' satisfaction with their program results in students putting more time and effort into learning (which can be translated into a higher GPA), rather than students' GPAs influencing their perceptions of satisfaction with their program. Curiously, none of the interviewees mentioned GPA as a determinant in their positive or negative experiences in the Faculty. One interviewee did comment on less learning with some courses that emphasized grading through exams:

> Actually I found I spent more time because you had to know what you were doing, you don't just have to talk your way out of an exam. With exams all you have to do is know your stuff for a while, and then you can just forget it. Whereas, I found with the pass/fail you're expected to have and maintain a certain level of knowledge (#008; Lines: 201-208).

One suggestion for restructuring was to reduce the number of large lecture format courses and/or include more small group seminars. Argument for this suggestion is supported by the findings of Neumann, Finaly-Neumann, and Reichel (1990), who recommend that "Faculty and administrators alike ought to explore means of strengthening academic programs' flexibility through emphasizing electives, self-directed learning, independent study, and courses concerned with critical questions, while replacing as much as possible large lecture-format courses" (p. 30).

Furthermore, Neumann and Neumann's (1981) investigation of determinants of student's satisfaction with course work argue that it is becoming more and more evident that students' evaluations are influenced by nonteaching and nonlearning factors such as presentational style, grading policy, test and requirement policies, course characteristics, and attitudinal factors. The above was also found to be applicable in this study. For example, presentational style was linked to teaching qualities; grading policy, test and requirement policy was linked to administrative programming; course characteristics were linked to large-lecture format vs. small group seminars; and attitudinal factors were linked to staff and professors' attitudes of assistance or nonassistance. All these factors determined whether or not experiences were deemed as positive or negative.

Doyle (1985) provided an overview of the research on learning to teach. He described the conflict between the practical needs of student-teachers for techniques in order to "survive" teaching and the theoretical characteristics of their professional curriculum. This supports the conclusion that reality-based learning is the central concept that influences the perception of positive or negative experiences in preservice teaching, since this very concern has been clearly echoed by the participants of this study.

Though the theory that emerged from this project argued that a reality-based educational process was the most important element in defining positive and negative experiences for students, it has received very little attention amongst investigators as a factor in student-satisfaction. The majority of the empirical literature focused on finding statistically significant factors that influenced student satisfaction. As well, in direct contrast to the findings of this study, Holt-Reynolds (1992) argued for teacher-educators to "shift resources from support of technical skills and toward support of rationale building (p. 17). Interviewees' frustration was with the lack of sufficient courses that provided more specific teaching skills, such as their curriculum courses. This is not to say that they would not desire support for rationale building if this was taught in a manner using good teaching qualities. It is clear that these particular participants want to be taught what is real and relevant. This is especially cogent for the administration in developing teacher-education programming.

Implications for the Faculty

A limitation of this study was that it did not investigate the administration's goals in running the Faculty. Strengthening academic and pedagogical training is an obvious goal, but what form should it take? How significant is it for the Faculty to have students become skilled and experienced teachers, compared to receiving knowledge in the liberal arts, with some teacher instruction added on? What takes precedent - more of a liberal arts education or more of a vocational skills approach to teacher-education? Holt-Reynolds (1992) wonders about the teaching objectives of teacher-educators. Is it to have preservice teachers:

> leave our courses carrying a bag of teacher tricks that they can adapt to the contexts in which they find themselves in the years ahead...to develop technical expertise at setting up cooperative learning tasks, writing clear lesson plans, imagining clever schema activation pre-reading activities, crafting interesting and authentic writing tasks, setting up and evaluating journals....(p.16)

Or is it to have:

> preservice teachers leave our courses more aware of their personal history-based beliefs and habits of making sense out of classrooms, able to consciously choose to frame classroom events in new ways and ready to defend instructional practices using a variety of rationales....(p.16)

At this beginning phase in their teaching careers, interviewees would argue for the former, while administrators may have a broader vision of education and argue for the latter. A need for and emphasis on increasing student's practical experiences in teaching seems clear, if student-satisfaction is considered an important criteria in program development for administrators. Quoting from Getty's (1990) study, this does not necessarily seem to be the case:

> After the publication of national reports on reform, such as those of the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a profession (1986), which urged that the preparation of teachers occur in two phases, with the undergraduate years devoted to a liberal arts education and a strong subject-matter preparation followed by postbacculaureate years devoted to profession education, many liberal arts colleges and universities were spurred to analyze their undergraduate certification programs and either make changes to

> existing programs or design new programs for immediate implementation (p.13).

A reality-based education for teachers may not be seen as the most important criteria for educators when developing teaching programs compared to a broader and more liberal arts education. As mentioned above, administrators may lean more towards emphasizing a solid foundation in the liberal arts since that may be seen as having a more far-reaching impact in our overall society than training teachers in the specifics of their profession. Nevertheless, higher education program changes work best when informed by values, past experiences, and needs of those affected by the change. Thus, students attitudes are important considerations for changes to programs in the Faculty of Education. This study presents their attitudes as calling for a realistic and practical education, more than for a liberal arts education. Herein lies the conflict (and, therefore the perception of negative experiences) between administration and students in their goals of teacher-education.

Similar to the interns in Gettys' study, it seems that students in this study would be willing to do a one-year practicum. One interviewee was in favor of extending the program from a four year to a five year program:

> With the practicum it would be nice to have it for a whole semester. Maybe we need to make the education a

> five year program, instead of a four year. Just that we definitely need to be in the classroom more often throughout our education. Whether it be I suppose in the traditional, I really feel the education degree should be five years. Two years doing your electives, three years with education classes and doing small or ongoing practicums throughout all of this in the last three years (#003; 580- 589).

Even so, it can be argued that due to a focus on a reality-based style of learning, students who went into teaching would not welcome four-years of a liberal arts education while waiting to be trained in their chosen profession as teachers in their final fifth year.

Delimitations

The parameters of this study invoved choosing participants who met the following criteria:

1. They were students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta
2. They had graduated from the Faculty in 1992 or,
3. They were completing their final term in Spring of 1993.
4. They were in the Faculty of Education for no less than two years.
5. They were not post-diploma students. That is, they had no prior professional teaching experience.

Since information regarding the Faculty and programming in the Faculty changes from year to year, the scope of this research was limited to the years mentioned above. Secondly, the method of research used also limited the focus of the study, as noted under Limitations of Grounded Theory Methodology.

Limitations

The present study was limited to interviews with only preservice teachers, without attempts to get the administration's, professors' or staff's perspectives. This may have broadened and created some balance in the theoretical implications of the study. As well, the administration's goals in running the Faculty were not set out so that a comparison could have been made between students' expectations and the Faculty's goals. This information would have provided useful data in terms of program restructuring.

Conclusions

The theory outlined here is partially supported by some studies. However, it is also offered as an alternative to other existing perspectives on teacher education and student satisfaction. This grounded theory of a reality-based educational process as being the most influential determinant of student's positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education, generated from data systematically obtained and analyzed through the constant comparative method, now requires further testing through the application of empirical methodologies that focus on verification rather than theory-generation. At the very least, it is hoped that this study offers a tested approach to guide research on student experiences in their program of study.

Table 1
Overview of Negative Experiences (Transcript #001)

Subcategory	Properties	Contexts
Nonlearning Experiences	artificial	micro-teaching
	non-transferable	course to classroom
	inapplicable	repetition of material
	unrelated	rote-memory
	didactic	multiple-choice exams
Practicum Errors	(Properties and contexts listed under practicum experiences)	
Discontinuity of Learning	timing	callback
	adjustments	teaching flow switch
	accommodations	
Negative Image of Profession	inappropriate career choice	need something practical to do with arts degree
	lack of strict entry requirements	damage to professional image
Contradictions in Faculty Goals	hypocrisy	philosophy vs. practice reality of numbers game
Scarcity of Resources and Options	major cutbacks	courses unavailable
	number of students ongoing training required	courses full specialized courses
Poor Teaching Qualities	(Properties and contexts listed under NTQ)	

Table 2
Overview of Good Teaching Qualities

People Skills	Encourage Learning	Love of Teaching
Genuine	Encourage thinking	Knowledgeable
Empathic	Encourage development of ideas, reflection, questioning	Skillful
Understanding	Allow for learning integration	Mentors
Sensitive	Focus on relevant issues	Intellectual patience in explaining concepts
Supportive	Practical	Reflective
Respectful	Receive feedback and input	Display love for learning/written word
Humor	Willingness to learn from students	Demonstrative
Wit	High expectations of students	Interest in material
Interactive	Open to discussions	Adventurism
Open-minded	Stimulate intellectual development	Paced
Personable		
Approachable		
Playful		
Avoid favoritism		
Realistic		

Table 3
Overview of Poor Teaching Qualities

Lack People Skills	Discourage Learning Process	Dislike Teaching
Cynical Unempathic Stiff Ineffectual Awkward Rigid Insensitive Critical Favoritism Inconsistent Unapproachable Unsupportive Harsh Disrespectful Lack humor Erratic Noninteractive Controlling	Discourage thinking (rote-memory) Discourage development of ideas, reflection, questioning Forced learning Focus on irrelevant issues Impractical Unable to receive feedback Unwilling to learn from students Unrealistic expectations Dictation/lecture teaching style to take copious notes Closed to discussions Non-stimulation of intellectual development	Cynical of system Just a job Poorly organized Out-dated material Lack patience in explaining concepts Lack love for learning and written word Disinterest in material

Table 4
Overview of Negative Experiences

Subcategory	Properties	Contexts
Nonlearning Experiences	artificial	beat the system arbitrary grading system
	impractical	purely theoretical
	non-transferable	from course to classroom
	inapplicable	repetition of material
	unrelated	rote-memory
	didactic	multiple-choice exams
Practicum Errors	(Properties and contexts listed under practicum experiences)	
Discontinuity of Learning	timing	practicum briefness callback
	insufficient information	incomplete experience of teaching
	adjustments accommodations	teaching flow switch
Administrative Difficulties	scarcity of resources and options	major cutbacks large number of students quota system courses unavailable, filled or only for specialization poorly organized courses
	minor selection process	hit/miss process
	contradictions in Faculty goals	philosophy vs. practice adapting to reality of numbers game
	contradictory information	continuous calendar changes inconsistent and contradictory information create gaps

Table 4
Overview of Negative Experiences (Cont.)

Subcategory	Properties	Contexts
Administrative Difficulties	changing program requirements	errors in records slow records/registration processing
	negative staff attitudes	impatient, uncooperative reluctant to assist
Poor Teaching Qualities	(Properties and contexts listed under PTQ)	

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APPENDIX A

Dear Graduate,

The major purpose of this letter is to offer you our sincere congratulations on your recent achievement. Those of us in Education at the University are exceptionally proud of our graduates and we are very hopeful that you will keep in touch with the Faculty as you continue on your career path.

We are going to make a concerted effort to try and find out how our people are doing, what are the successes and failures; in fact, how can we help?

One way you can help us right now would be to take the time to drop either of us a note detailing any of your experiences in the Faculty of Education that you think might be helpful for us to know. We toyed with the idea of sending you a questionnaire, but thought it might be better just to leave it up to you to tell us what you think we should know. We're interested in positive experiences as well as negative ones, if you have professors or teaching assistants that helped you, we'll relay your message to those people. On the other hand, if you have ideas for us that might improve our delivery of service, let us know about that.

We are planning to publish, for the first time in many years, an Annual Report of the Faculty of Education which would be available September. 1992. If you would like a copy of the report, just ask. We'll send it out to you.

Finally, how is it out there in the field? We would be interested to know if you're having difficulty finding work, if you're ready to start teaching, basically what is happening? At the same time, we'd like to know how we could have been more helpful in preparing you for work in the field. We're hoping to hear from you. Don't forget the major purpose of this letter was to say congratulations! We enjoy working with students. Good luck in your future career as a colleague.

Sincerely,

David Sande
Undergraduate Studies

John G. Paterson
Research and External Relations

APPENDIX B

Dear Graduate,

You recently received a letter asking you that you drop us a note detailing any of your experiences in the Faculty of Education that you thought might be helpful for us to know. We were interested in positive experiences as well as negative experiences and if you had ideas that might improve our delivery of service.

We are now looking to do a more in-depth follow-up on some of your responses through an interview. The information gathered from the confidential interview will be the basis of a Master's thesis describing positive and negative experiences of our recent graduates and their suggestions for improvements.

Interviewing dates are being set up on Friday, July 31, and Friday, August 7, 1992. We would appreciate your participation in this project. We would ask you to please think on:

1) Your experiences in the Faculty of Education (both positive and negative)
2) Professors or Teaching Assistants who have influenced you
3) Ideas to improve our delivery of service

Also:

4) Your experiences in finding work
5) How ready you are to start teaching
6) Improvements that are needed in preparing students for work in teaching

We are only able to do interviews with a certain number of volunteers, therefore, we cannot accommodate all participants who show interest. However, we thank you in advance for your interest. Please contact Doris Ryan at -------- (evenings) or Chris Baines at -------- to set up an interview in the Education Clinic (Rm 1-157).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

John G. Paterson, Associate Dean
Faculty of Education

APPENDIX C

Study Title

A Grounded Theory Investigation on Positive and Negative Experiences of Education Students at the University of Alberta

Principal Investigator

Doris Ryan, Master of Education student

Nature and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to increase understanding of those contexts and experiences perceived to contribute to or take away from a more effective learning environment through thematic analysis of the information provided by students on their positive and negative experiences in the Faculty of Education. As a grounded theory study the emphasis is on things which actually happened and were directly experienced, in this case by students who have recently graduated or are close to graduating from the program.

Confidentiality

All information will be kept confidential. Any information with the potential to identify the respondent or those described in the interviews (names, locations, unusual circumstances) and any other identification deemed to risk anonymity or confidentiality will be changed or deleted. Thematic analysis will be coded by number and all information relative to the source of the information removed. The biographical sheet will be kept separate and also coded for purposes of analysis. Transcripts and coding information will be stored in a secure place by the investigator. Results of the study will not identify any data with any specific person.

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

A Grounded Theory Investigation
on Positive and Negative Experiences of Education Students
at the University of Alberta

Consent for Participation

I acknowledge that the research project described has been explained to me and that any pertinent questions which I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand I may do a follow-up interview based on information provided in my first interview. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in the study and may exercise my right to opt out at any time.

I understand that by consenting to participate in the study, I am releasing information that will be used for research or publication with my anonymity assured. I also understand that all identifying data will be changed or deleted and that the results will in no way be associated with my name. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to discuss the results with the investigator.

I also understand that I will be asked to complete a Biographical Data sheet.

Signed________________________________

APPENDIX E

Biographical Sheet

Name: ______________________________ Code:_____

No.__________________________

Age:_____

Sex:_____

Marital Status:____

Children and ages:____

Department/Specialty:____

Educational History:____

Employment Status:____

Other relevant information related to your educational and/or teaching experiences: